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ABSTRACT

In Canada today there is a clear move toward a more outcomes-based education system. This report examines the state of high school student assessment and reviews standards and accountability strategies. It reports on the policies, programs, and initiatives in all provincial ministries or departments of education and a sample of school boards across the country. Data were derived from a telephone survey of departmental/ministerial representatives from all 10 provinces and the 2 territories and from a questionnaire that was mailed to 279 school boards. A total of 140 boards responded, a 50 percent response rate. Data show that both boards and ministries are putting more emphasis on the development of comprehensive policies to cover all aspects of student evaluation. There is some movement away from relying on paper-and-pencil testing as the sole means of evaluation; the use of more authentic, performance-based approaches and a greater variety of assessment techniques are being promoted. Some of the best practices in high school evaluation involve use of a broad range of assessment methods; introduction of or improvements to provincial examinations; greater use of summative and formative evaluations; greater emphasis on modifying evaluation for special-needs students; use of performance-based assessment; and more reporting to parents and the public. Thirteen tables are included. Appendices contain copies of the two questionnaires and selected school board material. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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Evaluating Achievement of Senior High School Students in Canada

A study of Policies and Practices of Ministries and School Boards in Canada

by

Lenora Perry Fagan &
Dana Spurrell

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Canadian Education Association

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A Study of Policies and Practices of Ministries and School Boards in Canada

by
Lenora Perry Fagan
and
Dana Spurrell

Canadian Education Association
Suite 8-200, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V5
1995

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Highlights of the Study

1. Recent education reforms focusing on high achievement have highlighted the need for quality assessment at the provincial, as well as at the school, level.

2. Since 1977, the number of jurisdictions (provinces and territories) with provincial examinations has increased from three to nine.

3. All but one province and one territory have assessment programs in place for program and system evaluation.

4. Classroom evaluation is becoming more comprehensive, covering a broader range of objectives than it has done traditionally.

5. Teachers and other educational staff in the schools and boards play a major role in the design and administration of provincial assessment in all jurisdictions.

6. Provincial assessments are beginning to include more extended response (essay) items and, in some cases, performance evaluation of objectives that cannot be tested with paper and pencil instruments.

7. Eighty-eight per cent of school boards have assessment policies covering the last three years of high school.

8. Although there is a trend toward the use of more performance evaluations, the most common methods of classroom evaluation are still teacher-made tests, homework, and projects.

9. Eighty per cent of boards offer professional development activities in assessment training. However, only 46% of boards have a designated individual who is solely responsible for assessment and evaluation.

10. Provincial assessments provide the main source of information for scholarship selection in all jurisdictions where this information is available.

11. In many boards and ministries across the country, exemplary policies and best practices are being encouraged and implemented.

About the Authors

Lenora Perry Fagan is the Director of Evaluation, Research, and Planning in the Department of Education and Training, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. She is a graduate of Memorial University of Newfoundland (B.A., B.A.Ed., M.Ed.) and of the University of Toronto (Ph.D.). Dr. Fagan is responsible for all student evaluation activities of the Newfoundland Department and is involved on behalf of her province with the assessment, indicators, and statistics initiatives of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. She represents Canada on the international educational outcomes assessment committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and is the provincial contact for OECD educational indicators project. As well, her division is responsible for the administration in Newfoundland of the Third International Mathematics Study sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Dr. Fagan is also an active participant in a number of professional associations in both education and public administration.

Dana Spurrell is a graduate student in the Applied Social Psychology (Co-operative) Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She received her B.Sc. from Memorial University in 1992. She has worked at Memorial University as a research assistant in the field of psychology. As part of her studies in Applied Social Psychology she has completed several courses in research design and methodology as well as advanced statistics. She recently completed two work terms with the Newfoundland Department of Education and Training in evaluation and assessment.

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Chapter 1

The Context of Student Assessment in Canada

Introduction

NEVER IN CANADA'S HISTORY has there been such an overriding concern with educational standards and academic achievement. The public is demanding that students leave school with a solid foundation in communication skills, mathematics, science, technology, and global understanding. The widely held belief that education is the key to a viable economy and global competitiveness has placed the system under great public scrutiny. National assessment and accountability efforts, designed to promote learning and measure the effectiveness of this country's education systems, are thriving. Most provinces have introduced graduation certification examinations, as well as a variety of other province-wide assessment programs.

In 1978, when the Canadian Education Association produced its previous document on evaluating academic achievement in the last three years of secondary school in Canada[1], it found that nearly all provinces had dropped graduation examinations, which had been firmly entrenched in earlier decades. In fact, at that time, only Quebec and Newfoundland still maintained a comprehensive system of province-wide examinations. Today, in 1995, there has been a complete reversal; all but three of Canada's 12 provinces and territories have returned to some type of secondary school examinations. As well, most provinces have undertaken efforts to establish clearly defined graduation outcomes and detailed program objectives for each subject area. There is clearly a move toward a much more outcomes-based education system, starting with the very early grades.

This report revisits CEA's previous publication and looks again at the state of high school student assessment in Canada. It reviews the present focus on

1. V. R. Nyberg, and B. Lee, *Evaluating Academic Achievement in the Last Three Years of Secondary School in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association, 1978).

standards and accountability and reports on the policies, programs, and initiatives of all provincial ministries/departments[2] and a sample of school boards. It also looks at some of the best practices engaged in by the provinces. The general feedback from those participating in the survey was extremely positive. Many respondents said a study of this type was long overdue and would be very useful to those engaged in education reform and the retooling of their systems.

Standards and Accountability

Historically, education has been seen as something that is useful in improving the quality of life for the individual, not the means by which the nation could achieve greatness. Today, however, education has become linked with national well-being as much as it is to personal well-being. It is now one of the world's most valued commodities, with every country striving to outdo others in order to hold a privileged position in the global economy. Although education has always been highly valued in this country, its marketability is now interconnected with the business and financial world of buying, trading and selling. It is this linkage that has forced public accountability onto a profession that previously had been accountable primarily to the profession itself.

The business planning model, which focuses on such activities as strategic planning, quality service, total quality management, and benchmarking, is being implemented in the education system. The education equivalent, not unlike that found in other organizations, is founded on the same basic premises, taking the form of priority setting, establishing standards of performance, assessing educational outcomes, developing educational indicators, and school improvement. National efforts, such as the School Achievement Indicators Program, the Pan-Canadian Educational Indicators Program, and the Report on Education in Canada, initiated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, could not have happened ten years ago. In spite of the clear provincial and territorial responsibility for education, every jurisdiction has recognized its responsibility to support Canada's position in the world by striving to provide quality educational services. Because of the education-economy link, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the senior high school and the quality of graduates.

The United States has a longer history of linking education to national performance than Canada, perhaps because of its greater interest in maintaining its position as a world power. As far back as Sputnik, the U.S. recognized the need for better scientific education, if not the need for high levels of general education for its whole population. The full value of education was not recognized until the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the National Commission on Excel-

2. Throughout this report the terms "ministry" and "department" are used interchangeably, as are the terms "high school" and "secondary school."

lence in Education. This scathing report roundly condemned the American education system. By the last half of the eighties, American politicians of every stripe were competing to be seen as the first and the greatest supporters of educational reform. Education had become one of the top priorities of the political agenda.

The 1980s and early 1990s saw a flood of educational experimentation. There were the effective schools movement, the coalitions of essential schools, the charter schools, the alternative schools movement, outcomes-based education, and the list goes on. Out of all of these experiments came some excellent practices, and as many or more counterproductive approaches to reform. Gradually, however, success stories began to emerge, and through systematic educational research and close observation, a pattern began to unfold. Researchers found that the key to success, as in most successful organizations, was consistently tied to clearly specifying outcomes; measuring those outcomes to see the extent to which they were being achieved; using the information gathered from assessments for feedback to students, teachers, and schools; and ensuring ongoing, formal monitoring of the success in schools. These measures, along with decentralized, school-based decision making and centralized responsibility for educational accountability and performance, have proven to be viable and successful practices that are consistently associated with raising the achievement levels of students.

By the mid-1980s, Canadians also began to think more seriously about student achievement. However, the whole issue of focusing on objectives and outcomes as the basis for successful schooling was still being resisted by many who had been educated in the self-actualization educational philosophies of the 1960s and '70s. These philosophies, promoted by highly acclaimed educational commissions such as the Ontario Commission of 1968 (which issued the Hall-Dennis Report[3]), focused attention almost entirely on education for individual self-fulfilment.

One of the first widely circulated Canadian reports to challenge the principles and practices adopted by educators in the late sixties and early seventies, was the *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts.* In that report, Radwanski suggested that the world was in the "midst of a socio-economic transformation every bit as fundamental as the earlier shift from the agrarian to the industrial era" and underscored the importance of education in a world moving "from exploitation of material resources to reliance on human knowledge."[4] It focused on the importance of education in social and economic well-being, as well as in personal development. His very first recommendation for change in education was as follows:

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3. Provincial Commission on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario (Hall-Dennis Report), *Living and Learning* (Toronto, ON: Newton Publishing,1968).

4. G. Radwanski, *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts* (Toronto, ON: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1987), p. 2.

That the emphasis of educational philosophy in Ontario be shifted from process to outcomes, and that the objectives of education be defined in terms of the acquisition of specified demonstrable knowledge and skills by all children ...[5]

At least two more of Radwanski's recommendations bear mentioning as they relate directly to the issues of achievement discussed here. They are,

That...educational policy in Ontario set clear and sequential outcome goals for each grade;[6]

and

That standardized province-wide tests at least in reading comprehension, writing, mathematics, reasoning and problem solving, and learning skills, as well as in other core curriculum subjects in high school, be administered to all elementary and high school students at appropriate intervals throughout the years of schooling.[7]

These recommendations, although not popular at the time, are very similar to those made in a number of Royal Commission reports over the past five years, including Ontario's *For the Love of Learning*[8], which was responsible for the recent establishment of the Education Quality and Accountability Office which will be implementing a province-wide testing, reporting and school improvement program for Ontario.

The implementation secretariat of the Newfoundland Royal Commission, which produced *Our Children, Our Future*,[9] wrote in a recent implementation document, *Adjusting the Course II*,

The overriding objective in all of our attempts to reform the system is to transform this society from one of persistent under-achievement to one whose achievement ranks with the best in the nation.[10]

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
8. Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, *For the Love of Learning* (Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario, 1994).
9. Newfoundland Royal Commission, *Our Children, Our Future: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education* (St. John's, NF: Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, 1992.
10. Newfoundland Royal Commission Secretariat, *Adjusting the Course II* (St. John's, NF: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1994), p. iii.

As a result of that objective, the Newfoundland and Labrador Commission recommended introducing a wide range of assessment programs. These recommendations are premised on the fact that improvement can only be made if achievement is consistently monitored, and that society generally will be improved by raising education standards.

The Sullivan Royal Commission in British Columbia, coming right at the beginning of the accountability movement in Canada, recommended that the province "develop an assessment, evaluation, and standards framework in support of Primary, Intermediate, and Graduation programs...to be phased in over a ten-year period."[11] It further recommended monitoring changes to school systems, enhancing the accreditation program, and reporting information on performance.

In 1992, the New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education produced a document titled *Schools for a New Century*.[12] That document also recommended sweeping changes in student assessment and recognized the need for public accountability.

Even those provinces without commissions and major task forces have introduced programs to consistently monitor achievement and promote excellence in classroom student evaluation practices. Furthermore, most have undertaken planning initiatives where they have specified goals and objectives for learning.

Reforms and Secondary Schools

When student certification examinations were initially introduced it was done to ensure that the principles of comparability and fairness were adhered to. Because many post-secondary institutions, employers, scholarship sponsors and others wished to use high school assessment results, it was felt that a grade should mean the same thing regardless of which school a student attended. Furthermore, if there were no common examinations, it was thought, post-secondary institutions would begin to administer their own entrance examinations, which may or may not reflect the curriculum of the schools. Common provincial examinations were seen as a convenient selection tool for many education and labour market purposes.

Of course, examinations still serve these purposes and recent high school assessment reforms may not, on the surface, appear to be related to the accountability movement. However, a review of the debates that took place before provincial examinations and assessments were reintroduced in several provinces over the past few years shows that legislatures were clearly responding to the public

11. Cited in British Columbia Ministry of Education, *Enabling Learners: Working Plan #3* (Victoria, BC: Government of British Columbia,1990).

12. New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education, *Schools for a New Century* (Fredericton, NB: Government of New Brunswick, 1992).

concern about how prepared the youth leaving the schooling system were. Even provinces like Newfoundland, Quebec, and Saskatchewan, which have had provincial certification examinations for generations, have begun to see the results of the examinations as a major source of accountability information, regardless of the initial reasons for introducing them. For example, Quebec has begun reporting examination results by school, and Newfoundland has been reporting results of examinations by board for several years.

Today, all four Atlantic Provinces are engaged in the collaborative development of graduation outcomes. These outcomes are intended to influence both high school curriculum design and assessment practices, and the information collected through the assessment will be the centrepiece for a major accountability system, the Atlantic Provinces Educational Indicators Program. The Atlantic Provinces' initiatives will likely mean common curriculum and assessment in key areas right across the Atlantic region.

In spite of the accountability movement, assessment in the classroom is still within the purview of the teachers. Teachers are expected to use whatever student evaluation strategies best serve the learning needs of the students. To ensure that teachers understand this important area, both preservice training programs and in-service programs in student evaluation are now in great demand and are the major components in most professional development activities. Ministries in most provinces have taken steps to see that they have appropriate policies to guide the teachers' work in this area.

This study was initiated particularly to look at assessment policies and practices in the last three years of secondary schooling, not to review accountability and educational reform. However, student assessment, being what it is today, cannot be discussed without looking at the broader context in which it exists.

A Brief Glance at Recent Assessment Reviews

Reviewed here are a number of reports on educational assessment that have been conducted since 1978. It is not intended to be a complete review of the literature, and we acknowledge that other such documents are not discussed here. (some of these documents were not available to the authors, and others are not included because their findings are the same as those noted in more readily available reports.)

Evaluating Academic Achievement in the Last Three Years of Secondary School in Canada [13] reviewed practices in high school evaluation from 1960 to 1977. Although this report had many significant things to say about educational evaluation, one of the more interesting was that in the approximately two decades covered by the study, most provinces had gone from having a comprehensive set

13. V. R. Nyberg, and B. Lee, *op. cit.*

of provincial examinations to having none at all. British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island all completely dropped provincial examinations for graduation purposes; New Brunswick maintained them only for French students; Saskatchewan went from all students writing examinations to only students who did not have accredited teachers; Quebec and Newfoundland maintained examinations, but the students' final mark now included a component provided by the school. Generally, the provinces that had dropped provincial examinations defended their decision on the basis that it was excessive, that teacher qualifications had improved, and that types of assessment more versatile than paper and pencil tests were needed. Other defences focused on the pressure being felt from educators and on a philosophical change based on the premise that those who taught were in the best position to evaluate.

In a *Summary of Provincial Assessment Practices in Canadian Public Education*,[14] it was reported that by 1985 five provinces were administering compulsory final examinations at the secondary level: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, and Newfoundland. British Columbia and Alberta had reintroduced provincial examinations in 1984. At that time, the number of examinations ranged from 150 in Quebec down to seven in Alberta. Quebec held examinations for most subjects in secondary levels 3, 4, and 5 (grades 9, 10, and 11), whereas other provinces had examinations only at the final high school year. In all five provinces final examination marks were combined with school marks to determine a final grade. Saskatchewan still only required those who did not have accredited teachers to write examinations. New Brunswick had just introduced a test in mathematics and English to be written at grade 11, but these examinations did not form part of the graduation requirement. Also, it is interesting to note that by 1985, seven provinces had introduced testing programs for program evaluation purposes, but only British Columbia, Manitoba, and Newfoundland conducted this type of testing in secondary schools.

In *A Summary of Canadian Assessment Practices* [15] the authors reported that by 1988 there were six provinces and two territories with provincial examinations: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick (French), Newfoundland, Yukon (using B.C. examinations), and the Northwest Territories (using Alberta examinations). Other secondary level assessments were being conducted in British Columbia (mathematics, science and language arts in grade 10), Saskatchewan (Canadian Tests of Basic Skills [CTBS] in grade 12), Manitoba (reading, writing, mathematics, science at various grades), Ontario (chemistry, physics, mathematics, and geography on an alternating sample basis at various grades), New Brunswick (second language in grade 10, mathematics in grade 11, and CTBS and second language in grade 12), Nova Scotia (social stud-

14. H. Schulz, *Summary of Provincial Assessment Practices in Canadian Public Education* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Education, 1985).

15. R. Jones, and B. Carbol, *A Summary of Canadian Assessment Practices* (Victoria, BC: British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1988).

ies, science, mathematics, and language arts in grade 12), and Newfoundland (CTBS in grade 12). In total, by 1988, nine provinces and two territories had some type of student assessment.

Other sources of interesting information on assessment and assessment practices in Canada can be found in *The Craft of Student Evaluation in Canada*, *Curriculum and Assessment Trends in Canada*, *Standardized Testing in Canada*, and in the *Canadian Journal of Education*.[16]

Changes to Provincial Examinations and Assessment Practices

Table 1 shows, in a general way, what has happened in the administration

Table 1. Summary of Provincial Examination Data for 1960, 1977, 1985 and 1994

Province	1960	1977	1985	1994
British Columbia	Provincial examinations for students from non-accredited schools, private schools, and those with C, D, and E's from accredited schools. Examinations were also held for grade 13 students	No departmental exams for certification purposes. Grade 12 scholarship exams conducted by the Ministry of Education	Departmental exams in grade 13 and grade 12 academic courses	Grade 12 departmental exams in 15 academic courses as part of the requirements for graduation
Alberta	The High School and University Matriculation Examination Board regulated grade 12 exams	No departmental exams. However, exams held for the purpose of student appeals and program evaluation	Diploma exams for seven grade 12 academic courses	Departmental exams in seven academic areas as part of graduation requirements
Saskatchewan	All grade 12 students wrote departmental exams to ensure uniform standards for awarding scholarships	Students not having accredited teachers (35% of students) wrote departmental exams for 50% of their final mark	Departmental exams in 27 grade 12 courses for students of non-accredited teachers	Departmental exams in nine academic areas for students of non-accredited teachers
Manitoba	Provincial exams for students in the last three years of secondary school supervised by the High School Board of Examination	No provincial exams. Students evaluated by schools. High school achievement tests held annually by schools and department	No provincial exams. Students' marks were awarded by the teachers/schools	One provincial exam each year from one of seven academic courses

16. L.D. McLean, *The Craft of Student Evaluation in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association, 1985); G. Mussio, *Curriculum and Assessment Trends in Canada* (Victoria, BC: British Columbia Ministry of Education,1988); and R. Traub, *Standardized Testing in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association, 1994); *Canadian Journal of Education* 20:1 (1995).

Province	1960	1977	1985	1994
Ontario	Grade 13 students wrote a provincial exam to certify success in the general or academic program. Grade 12 was the school's responsibility	No province-wide exams	No provincial exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark	No departmental exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark
Nova Scotia	Province-wide exams conducted by the department for students in grades 11 and 12. These exams were required for graduation	No provincial exams for promotional purposes. High School Achievement Tests in grade 12 for program evaluation purposes	No provincial exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark	No provincial exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark
Prince Edward Island	Examinations for grades 10, 11, and 12. Grade 10 was set and marked by province; grades 11 and 12 conducted and marked by Atlantic Provinces Examining Board	No provincial exams were held	No provincial exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark	No provincial exams. Schools responsible for 100% of a student's mark
Newfoundland and Labrador	Examinations for grades 9, 10, and 11; grade 11 exams marked by the Atlantic Provinces Examining Board; the others by the province	Provincial exams were still given to grade 11 students. These exams were worth 50% of the student's final mark	Provincial (public) exams were held in the majority of grade 12 courses	Regular departmental examinations in 18 courses across six subject areas
Northwest Territories	No data available	No data available	No data available	Territorial exams (dev. by AB) written in seven courses
Yukon	No data available	No data available	No data available	Territorial exams (dev. by BC) held in ten course areas

Sources include V. Nyberg and B. Lee, *Evaluating Academic Achievement in the Last Three Years of Secondary School in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1978) and H. Schultz, *Summary of Provincial Assessment Practices in Canadian Public Education* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Department of Education, 1985).

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of examinations in Canada over the past 35 years. There are no data available for the Yukon and Northwest Territories for 1960, 1977, and 1985 because the previous studies quoted did not gather data for these two jurisdictions.

General Changes in Assessment Practices

Since the Nyberg and Lee study, student assessment has become the centerpiece of most educational reform efforts and has unprecedented support both inside and outside the educational system. Although assessment has been given a strong accountability voice, the support within the profession has helped maintain and integrate professional evaluation standards and principles in the day-to-day practices of teachers. The document *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* [17], which covers both classroom and large-scale assessments, was developed by a widely representative group of Canadian educators, and it supports the professional demand for evaluation integrity.

There is a general trend in both classroom and large-scale assessment to integrate curriculum, instruction and evaluation, and to ensure that assessment closely matches the objectives of learning. There is somewhat of a trend to move away from the practice of relying on paper and pencil testing as the sole means of evaluation, even though this study showed that it was still the primary means of evaluating students in the secondary school system. Current theory strongly promotes the use of more authentic, performance-based approaches to evaluation, and the use of a greater variety of techniques, even when paper and pencil tests make up a major component of assessment. Those who participated in this study were fully aware of current thinking and were promoting improved evaluation in their jurisdictions.

17. Joint Advisory Committee, *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta, Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation, 1993).

Chapter 2

Study Design and Methodology

IN JUNE 1994, the Canadian Education Association undertook a study of the assessment techniques and policies used in evaluating academic achievement in the last three years of high school in Canada. The study was to focus on what governmental and district practices and policies were and the extent to which these policies were being implemented and adhered to. An important dimension of this study was to solicit the views of education officials on best practices, positive changes, and on areas where more work and changes were needed. A further purpose of the study was to revisit an earlier CEA report [18] to determine the extent to which the assessment of high school achievement had changed since the previous study was done.

Guiding Questions

To focus the study a variety of background information, related literature, and survey questionnaires were reviewed. Documents pertaining to provincial assessment policies and practices were collected from several provinces. The earlier CEA report on evaluating achievement in the last three years of high school served as a starting point for the research and the development of research questions. The following general questions were formulated to guide the research, the interview protocol, and questionnaires:

18. V. R. Nyberg, and B. Lee, *op. cit.*

1. What changes have taken place in secondary school assessment since the previous CEA report?

2. What is included in the policies of education departments/ministries and school boards regarding student assessment in the final three years of high school?

3. What kinds of large-scale assessment programs are used for certification and for program evaluation by ministries/departments across the country? How are these programs administered?

4. What changes have been made in evaluation practices and policies over the past ten years? Why were these changes made?

5. What other changes are needed?

6. How are policies implemented and monitored?

7. How are results of assessment programs used?

8. What are some of the best practices now in place for student evaluation in secondary school?

9. How are assessments being used for the selection of scholarships?

Survey Population

Although it would have been desirable to survey all levels of professionals in the system and high school students, practical considerations such as cost and time limited the study to two groups: department/ministry and school board professionals in evaluation. In all cases, the provincial representative interviewed was the most senior administrator directly responsible for student evaluation programs. At the boards, questionnaires were completed by a director/superintendent of education or a designate, usually an assistant director/superintendent.

All ten provinces and the two territories were surveyed through a telephone interview. Before the formal interview, departmental/ministerial representatives were forwarded a list of the interview questions in a questionnaire format. This allowed the representatives time to review policies and other documents thoroughly and to prepare for the interview. Essentially, the telephone interview was a means of qualifying representatives' responses.

A stratified random sample of school boards representing all provinces and territories was also drawn. Thirty-five per cent of boards or a minimum of ten

boards (in cases where 35% of the population totalled fewer than ten boards) were selected from each province. Since Prince Edward Island has a total of only three boards it was decided that all the boards there would be included in the study. The Yukon Territory, which does not have a system of school boards, has three superintendents who are individually responsible for each of three areas. In an attempt to have a representative sample of the entire country, these three areas were included in the sample, producing a total sample size of 279 boards. Responses were received from 140 (50%) of these boards.

Although the response rate was relatively low, the nature of the study was such that the statistical significance of the results was not the driving force. The intent was to provide a general overview of assessment in this country by choosing a sample that was both reasonable and representative. The sample selected allowed a relatively comprehensive look at every Canadian jurisdiction and enough information to make some general comments on the current state of student evaluation in those jurisdictions.

Item Development and Data Collection

The primary purpose of the telephone interview was to provide an overview of the practices and policies followed in each of the provincial departments of education. For this reason, most questions were open-ended so that responses would not be restricted. The interview also prompted additional comments and often provided an "other" category as a means of qualifying and enhancing the responses. The jurisdictions and boards were also encouraged to send copies of assessment policies and guidelines, thus giving the researchers a better sense of what was being done.

Some of the items included in the school board questionnaire were tailored to suit the data collected from the department/ministry interviews. The provincial representatives indicated the dimensions of the ministerial responsibilities and provided some knowledge about the roles of the school boards in certain practices and policies. Other items were included in the school board questionnaire to provide information on topics not covered in the departmental interview. Generally, the questionnaire was more focused in scope and in the nature of the questions asked. It followed a close-ended format, providing a list of possible responses for most questions. However, like the telephone interviews, allowance was made for "other" responses and additional comments.

Analysis of Data

Evaluating high school students is a broad topic and a study like this can generate a wealth of views and opinions. This makes it difficult to conduct traditional statistical analyses that identify significant differences in data. Because of the amount and type of data collected and the desire to keep the report non-techni-

cal and easy to read, no advanced statistical analyses were conducted.

The ministerial interview. A thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected from the telephone interview. That is, data were categorized and coded so that general themes and trends in responses were identified. The summary tables and charts outline the more common responses given to the interview questions.

The school board questionnaire. The school board questionnaire did not require the same degree of coding and categorization as the interviews since most questions were asked in a close-ended format. A database structure was set up so that a frequency analysis could be conducted and trends and themes in the data could be identified. The summary tables and charts outline the details of the responses given.

After the data were reviewed and analyzed, it became apparent that some informational gaps existed. Some of the provinces were contacted a second time to obtain additional information so that a complete and true picture of assessment in this country could be presented. Other reports and documents were also reviewed as a means of validating and verifying the data collected.

Need for Further Study

As mentioned earlier, several constraints limited this study to just two groups. By surveying ministry and school board representatives, the report takes on an administrative slant. For a thorough understanding of the assessment techniques promoted and practised across the country, it would be necessary to survey representatives of schools. This would determine which practices are favoured by teachers and whether various policies are being implemented successfully. As well, students, parents, and employers need to be surveyed to gauge their reactions to new methods of evaluation.

Chapter 3

Role of Ministries in Student Assessment

ALL MINISTRIES OR DEPARTMENTS of education have, in recent years, taken a more active role in developing student assessment policy, whether for formal provincial assessment or for guiding how student assessment is conducted in the classroom. Some have developed a full set of guiding principles, policies and guidelines: others simply promote the use of fair practices as spelled out in a number of current documents in the evaluation field. In fact, the *Principles of Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* [19] was frequently referred to as guiding much of the recent work being done at the provincial level in a number of provinces and at boards. As well, the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education,* [20] developed by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices in the United States, was referred to by some respondents.

This chapter deals with responses of the ministry/departmental officials to policy development, implementation, and monitoring; policy changes; policies and practices related to provincial examinations and program assessments; ministry views of practices used in the provinces' classrooms; and satisfaction with their own assessment policies. In some sections, the reporting (especially that covered in tables) becomes rather tedious, but an effort has been made to present information in a straightforward and easy-to-read manner.

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19. Joint Advisory Committee, *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta, Centre for Research and Applied Measurement and Evaluation, 1993).

20. Joint Committee on Testing Practices, *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education,1988).

Provincial Student Assessment Policies

At the time of the survey, all provinces indicated that they had policies that covered several aspects of student evaluation in the last three years of high school, but the degree of depth and involvement of the departments and ministries varied greatly. In some cases, provincial policy was little more than a specification of what courses students needed to graduate, while other jurisdictions had policies, procedures and guidelines spelled out on all major areas of student evaluation.

Policy Design and Implementation. The extent of the jurisdictions' responsibility for student evaluation policy design and implementation varied depending on the type of evaluation or assessment covered by the policy. For example, there appeared to be a much more specific set of policies for provincial examinations than for other types of evaluation. In five of the provinces with provincial examinations, the department of education is responsible for both design and implementation of policy. In two provinces, the department and the boards are responsible, and in the two territories, the examinations are the responsibility of the department of two other provinces. In other areas of assessment policy, the involvement of others in the system was much more evident. Some provinces indicated that the department and boards were equally involved in policy development and design, and others indicated that the department, boards, and schools were all involved. In some cases, where there were no provincial examinations, ministry officials indicated that only boards, or schools, or both, were responsible for assessment policy.

Policy Implementation. All but one of the 12 jurisdictions indicated that they had methods in place for ensuring that polices, practices, and guidelines were implemented. (See Table 2.) A detailed analysis of the responses to this question showed nine broad options in use for implementing policy. These include:

- ✔ minister's orders supplemented by policy guidelines
- ✔ publishing documents, handbooks, and providing guidelines
- ✔ on-site visits and reviews
- ✔ in-service sessions, workshops, and seminars
- ✔ providing information and reporting results of provincial examinations and assessments
- ✔ formation of specialist implementation teams for new policies
- ✔ assigning co-ordinators for administering examinations
- ✔ centralized marking stations with training sessions
- ✔ collecting data and reviewing results from school evaluations

Only one province said that implementation was done solely by order of the minister, supplemented by documents on evaluation and assessment. There were several cases where published documents were used in implementation but this was done along with other strategies such as in-service sessions and reporting

Table 2. Provincial Student Assessment Policies

Province	Who Designs and Implements Policies for:		How is Provincial Policy Implemented?
	Provincial Exams	Other Provincial Assessment	
British Columbia	Province	Province and boards	Minister's order; distributing documents
Alberta	Province	Province and boards	On-site visits; reviewing data from school assessments
Saskatchewan	Province, boards, and schools	Province, boards, and schools	Distributing documents; in-service
Manitoba	Province	-	Department provides information on provincial testing results
Ontario	-	Province and boards	Workshops, seminars; publishing documents; specialist teams implement new policies
Quebec	Province and boards	Province and boards	Department provides published information, workshops, seminars
New Brunswick	French: Province and boards English: Province	French: Province and boards English: Province boards and schools	French: Department provides provincial testing results and guidelines; co-ordinators assigned to administer exams; centralized marking stations for provincial exams English: Department provides documents, testing results and guidelines; in-service; centralized marking stations for provincial exams
Nova Scotia	-	Province, boards, and schools	Department provides guidelines
Prince Edward Island	-	Province, boards and schools	Workshops, seminars
Newfoundland and Labrador	Province	Province and boards	In-service; workshops, seminars; department provides guidelines, information
Northwest Territories	Territory, and another province (Alberta)	Territory and boards	On-site visits; provide data results form provincial exams
Yukon	Territory and another province (BC)	Territory and schools	Department provides guidelines; workshops, seminars

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results. One province and one territory mentioned that on-site visits and reviews of implementation strategies are regularly carried out, a number noted that they conduct in-service sessions and workshops as a primary method of implementing policy. Seven said that they formally report results of assessments as part of their implementation strategy, one indicated that they use specialist teams in conjunction with workshops and publications, one collects and reviews school level evaluation data, and three said that provincial examination development and marking are used as a means of bringing people together for training sessions.

Policy Changes. All but one of the 12 jurisdictions indicated that there had been policy changes in student assessment over the past ten years. Although many changes were noted, they are categorized into these six groupings:

- provincial examinations
- evaluation strategies
- implementation strategies
- implementing provincial level program evaluation
- teacher accreditation
- modified evaluation and programs for special students

Since each of the 12 jurisdictions could have made one or more changes related to one or all of these areas, the total changes were numerous. Changes to provincial examination were mentioned most often in ministry responses; four of these departments mentioned the actual introduction of examinations in the province. Changes to policies to help improve evaluation strategies were mentioned eight times; improving implementation of evaluation policies through increasing publications and workshops were mentioned six times; policies related to using and introducing provincial program assessments were referred to several times; and teacher accreditation and modified evaluation were mentioned twice.

Although a number of reasons were given for making the policy changes referred to in Table 3, the reasons can be categorized into four groups:

- raising levels of achievement
- improving accountability for performance
- giving support for changes in curriculum emphasis
- improving the quality of the assessment program

By far the most common reasons given for making changes were related to improving accountability and raising levels of achievement. In all 11 jurisdictions, changes had taken place within the past ten years; most had taken place over time rather than all at once.

When asked if boards could change policies adopted by the departments/ ministries of education, the department officials gave varied answers. Five said yes, four said no, and three said that some policies could be changed but others could not. In fact, most provinces with provincial examinations had policies that had to be stringently followed, but other policies, which provided guidelines for school assessment, could be adapted somewhat or even changed completely in some cases. Classroom evaluation seems to be left pretty much to the school and the board.

Table 3. Recent Changes in Assessment Policies

Province	Year of Changes	Changes Made	Reasons for Changes
British Columbia	1988-1993	- increased reliance on performance evaluations -weight of final exams was reduced from 50% to 40% - released *Improving the Quality of Education*	- to be more responsive to public concerns - need to be more accountable to the public for the school system
Alberta	1985	- introduction of program policy manual - formal policies tied to the 1984 management and finance plan were introduced (emphasis on outcomes achieved)	- department wanted to focus more on the outcomes of learning (vs. the process)
Saskat-chewan	1988-89	- new assessment strategies incorp-orated into recent curriculum documents - a broader range of authentic assessment strategies encouraged - Plans to change format of provincial exams to include more open-response questions	- to support the implementation of new core curriculum
Manitoba	1990-91	- one exam per year introduced in grade 12	- perceived lack of uniformity in standards from school to school
Ontario	1986-87	- handbooks developed for 9 OACs - OAC teacher in-service program introduced - introduced system of program evaluation	- to meet concerns about inconsisten-cies in marks across schools - need for accountability in the system
Quebec	past 10 years	- the "old" certification system replaced by the "transitional" system and then by the "new" system - increased emphasis on evaluating performance levels, abilities and attaining program objectives - raised pass mark from 50% to 60%	- desire to place more emphasis on pupil year-long achievements - to share assessment responsibilities with school boards and schools - to encourage increased attainment of program objectives
New Brunswick	French: 1991	- provincial exam program was officially introduced - passing grade reduced from 60% to 55%	- need for more equity provincially - concerns about accountability for for school learning - to better inform students, parents and taxpayers - to increase the quality of teaching and programs of study
	English: on-going	- provincial exams reintroduced in 1985 - provincial exams became criterion-referenced tests counting for 30% of the students' final marks for grade 11 English and math	- to expand the testing program - reaction to *Schools for a New Century* - to identify where problems of poor student achievement begin

Province	Year of Changes	Changes Made	Reasons for Changes
Nova Scotia	past 10 years	- greater emphasis and dependence on collecting a wide range of assessment data for final evaluations - introduction of Nova Scotia Achievement Test - involved with the Maritime Provinces Education Foundation initiatives in curriculum development and assessment in math and science	- to assess a wider range of expectations for learner outcomes
Prince Edward Island	1993-94	- minister announces a return to provincial grade 12 exams (not yet implemented because of the Atlantic Provinces Education agreement on common core curriculm) - an agreement for common curriculum strategies was reached among the four Atlantic provinces	- concerns about consistency, content coverage and standards - concerns about consistency, content - desire for greater efficiency and increased quality in curriculum and assessment
Newfoundland and Labrador	1991	- published *Evaluation of Students in the Classroom: A Handbook and Policy Guide* - reduced number of provincial exams from 35 to 18 - greater look at modified evaluation for students with disabilities	- to encourage comprehensive assessments using a wide range of assessment techniques
Northwest Territories	—	No major changes in past 10 years	—
Yukon	1993-94	- diagnostic assessment program - construction of an item bank	- improve instruction - explain current grades being achieved by students

Provincial Examinations

Seven provinces and two territories have examination systems in place that contribute to the certification of students. As shown in Table 4, only Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia do not now have some kind of examination system. However, in some provinces with examinations the impact on certification is minimal and graduation does not depend on writing these examinations. Even in jurisdictions where there are wide-scale highly valued examination programs, there are special cases where students do not have to write examinations to graduate. For instance, under certain circumstances, regular students may be exempted from examinations. As well, some special needs students may acquire graduation status with modified courses or modified evaluations. Finally, special regulations may require only school evaluations of achievement from those students not wishing to continue further with their education.

Table 4. Provincial Examinations Across the Country

Province	When Exams are Held *	In What Subjects	Do Policies Cover Special Education Students?
British Columbia	June and August. Selected subjects are offered for examination in November, January and and April	Literature, language, second language, mathematics, physics chemistry, geology, biology, geography, history, latin, communications	Can receive special diploma issued by the province
Alberta	January, June, and August	Language, second language, mathematics, physics, chemistry biology, social studies	Can graduate only if provincially mandated courses are completed
Saskat-chewan	January, June, and August	English, second language, math physics, chemistry, biology, social studies, economics	Can get special diploma issued by province
Manitoba	One subject every year	Language, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, world issues (one examination per year on a rotational basis)	Can get a certificate issued by the school
Quebec	January, June, and August	Literature, language, second language, mathematics, physical sciences, chemistry, history	Can get special school leaving certificate if individual-ized objectives are met
New Brunswick	French: January and June English: Annually	French: Language, second language, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, history English: Literature, language, mathematics	French: Can get certificate from school English: Can get certificate from school or district
Newfound-land and Labrador	Final examinations (June), Supplementary examinations (November); extra language exam in January	Literature, language, second language, physics, environmental science, chemistry, geology, biology, geography, history, world problems	Can get provincial diploma if indiv-idualized objectives in mandated courses are met
Northwest Territories	Same as Alberta	English, mathematics, physics, environmental science, chemistry, biology, social studies	Can graduate only if objectives of provincially mandated course are met
Yukon	Same as British Columbia	Literature, language, second language, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geology, biology, geography, history	Can get a special letter issued by territory recog-nizing student's accom-plishments

*Source: *A Survey of Student Assessment/Evaluation in Canada* (Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Alberta Working Group, 1994).

British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, francophone New Brunswick, and Newfoundland have the most comprehensive sets of examinations; all primary academic subject areas are tested. Table 4 shows that all these provinces test in language/literature, mathematics, science, social studies, and second language. In most cases, the science areas of chemistry, physics, biology, and geology are tested separately, as are the social studies areas of history and geography. Also some provinces test separately in language and literature areas and in the different types of mathematics. In Saskatchewan, although there is a full set of examinations, they are given only to students who do not have accredited teachers; in Manitoba only one subject is tested annually; and in anglophone New Brunswick testing is done at grade 11 in mathematics and English, not in the graduating year. The Northwest Territories and the Yukon use examinations from Alberta and British Columbia respectively.

In all jurisdictions except Manitoba and New Brunswick, diplomas are issued by the ministry/department of education. In those provinces the diplomas are provided by the school boards.

In some cases special accommodations are made for students with learning disabilities so that they can receive a graduation certificate. Table 4 indicates how this is handled.

Examination Development. In all provinces with provincial examinations, test development is the responsibility of the ministry/department of education. However, all of the provinces involve teachers or other subject area specialists from the school system. In all provinces, the examination development process is complex, adhering to most of the general theoretical principles of test development. The process normally includes developing tables of specifications, using specialists teams to write and field test items, validating items, preparing final forms based on data from validation and field testing, and finally reviewing items with departmental curriculum specialists.

The format of the examinations varies from province to province. Most use a combination of multiple choice and extended response as shown in Table 5. The percentage of the exams that are objective and in essay form vary from subject to subject as well as from province to province.

All provinces and territories with provincial examinations have a certification system that provides for a final mark, which is made up of both the school evaluation and the examination. The weighting of the examination mark varies from 30% in Manitoba and anglophone New Brunswick, to 40% in British Columbia and the Yukon, to 50% in all other provinces. (See Table 6, page 25.)

Comprehensiveness of Examinations. Today many parents — and others — are asking how testing in high schools can improve the quality of the education system and its graduates. They complain that students graduate without solid basic knowledge and skills in communication, mathematics, science, technology, and global understanding. They want to know how this can happen when every education system in the country clearly indicates that these subject areas, with

Table 5. Provincial Examination Format and Development

Province	Who Prepares Exams	How Exams Are Prepared	The Most Common Format
British Columbia	Ministry	Several stages involving specialist teams and final review by the ministry	Multiple choice and open-ended. Video component in French and français-langue; oral component in français-langue
Alberta	Ministry	Several stages involving teacher advisory committees in conjunction with department	Multiple choice, numerical and written response
Saskatchewan	Ministry	Several stages involving accredited teachers and the department	Multiple choice and open-ended response items
Manitoba	Ministry	Several stages involving specialist teams and final review by the department	Multiple choice, written response
Quebec	Ministry	Several stages involving specialist teams and final review by the ministry	Multiple choice, written responses
New Brunswick	Ministry	French: Process with committees of teachers, specialists, and internal program and evaluation consultants English: Several stages with teacher advisory committees and department	French: Short, written responses; English: Multiple choice and open-ended responses
Newfoundland and Labrador	Ministry	Several stages involving teacher specialists and internal evaluation and program consultants; item banks are developed for some courses	Multiple choice, completions and extended response items; oral and listening included in second language
Northwest Territories	Alberta Department of Education	Same as Alberta	Same as Alberta
Yukon	British Columbia Ministry of Education	Same as British Columbia	Same as British Columbia

Source: Taken from *A Survey of Student Assessment/Evaluation in Canada* (Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Alberta Working Group, 1994).

their clearly specified outcomes, are important and are included in the primary goals of education, as well as in graduation requirements.

Since some students graduate without many essential skills and knowledge, parents, employers, and others are pressuring the education system to find a solution. Without these foundation skills, graduates are unable to make a smooth transition from school to higher education or to work. The education system is currently being charged with the responsibility for tackling this problem.

One of the more interesting debates over this issue deals with the comprehensiveness of the assessment of graduation outcomes in provincial examinations. There are a number of proponents both within and outside the education system who promote an examination system that is significantly more comprehensive in depth and coverage than any Canadian province or territory now provides. Newfoundland, through the implementation of the recommendations in its recent Royal Commission report, *Our Children, Our Future*, is one of the provinces currently engaged in this debate.

Three of the most commonly discussed types of comprehensive examinations are:

- ✔ Non-subject-based examinations that test comprehensive basic knowledge and skills, which set rigid minimum standards for graduation as well as standards for "majority achievement" and for "excellence."
- ✔ Comprehensive examinations that cut across subjects within a program area; i.e., examinations cover the full range of subjects in one area. In science, the single exam would cover physics, chemistry, biology, geology, etc. (This applies to other program areas such as social studies, literature, mathematics, communications.)
- ✔ Comprehensive examinations by subject areas, which would cover all levels of objectives in a high school. For example, in physics, a test would cover the full range of content and skills in all levels of the subject taught in the high school, rather than just that taught in exit-level courses.

Whichever meaning is ascribed to comprehensive examinations, implementing the concept would mean a significant change in most examinations across the country. At present, nearly all examinations are course-based as indicated by the responses documented in Table 6. However, respondents indicated that the very nature of some courses (such as French, and, to some extent mathematics and others) requires that previous knowledge and skills be included in the assessment. There is, however, no deliberate attempt to be comprehensive, except where it is dictated by the subject area.

Table 6. Comprehensiveness of Provincial Examinations

Province	Requirement for Graduation		Comprehensive Exams		Per cent Worth
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
British Columbia	√			√	40%
Alberta	√			√	50%
Saskatchewan		√		√	50%
Manitoba		√		√	30%
Ontario					
Quebec	√			√	50%
New Brunswick French English	√	 √		 √ √	 40% 30%
Nova Scotia					
Prince Edward Island					
Newfoundland and Labrador		√		√	50%
Northwest Territories	√			√	50%
Yukon	√			√	40%

Table 7. Marking the Provincial Examinations

Province	How the Exams Are Marked	Who Marks the Exams	Why Scaling or Adjustment Is Done
British Columbia	Written responses by committee of teachers; multiple choice items by computer scanning	Specialist teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	To ensure school marks and examination marks are consistent with each other
Alberta	Written responses and performance-based questions by committee of teachers; multiple choice by computer scanning	Specialist teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	None
Saskatchewan	Written responses by committee of teachers; multiple choice by computer scanning	Contracts, specialist teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	To ensure school marks and examination marks are consistent with each other
Manitoba	Written responses by committee of teachers; multiple choice by optical scanning	Subject area teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	None
Quebec	Written responses by committee of teachers; multiple choice by computer scanning	Subject area teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	To ensure consistency of standards among schools and to compensate for problems with examinations
New Brunswick English: and French	Written responses by committee of teachers; multiple choice by optical scanning	Subject area teachers mark written responses; analysts scan multiple choice	French: to ensure marks do not misrepresent students' true performance English: to compensate for problems with examinations
Newfoundland and Labrador	Essays by special marking board; multiple choice items by optical scanning	Specialist teachers mark essay items: measurement analysts scan multiple choice	To ensure consistency of standards among schools and to compensate for problems with examinations
Northwest Territories	Same as Alberta	Same as Alberta	None
Yukon	Same as British Columbia	Same as British Columbia	to ensure that marks represent students' true performance

Marking and Grading Procedures. Marking policies and practices, like most other aspects of examinations, vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction as shown in Table 7. In most provinces, marking boards, normally made up of qualified teachers, are established to grade the extended response (essay) part of provincial examinations. Usually objective responses (multiple choice primarily) are optically scored using suitable hardware and custom-made software. With the exception of British Columbia, all jurisdictions use numeric grades ranging from 0 to 100.

In all jurisdictions except Quebec, where the pass mark is 60, and francophone New Brunswick, where the pass mark is 55, the passing grade is 50. Only Quebec and Newfoundland make any adjustments to marks submitted to the Department of Education by the schools. (See Table 8.) However, six jurisdictions (Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland) make adjustments to the examination mark. Only Alberta and Manitoba say that they do not scale or adjust examination marks.

Table 8. Summary of Grading and Reporting Information

Province	Passing Grade	Form of Reporting	Issuing of Diploma	Statistical Adjustments		
				School	Prov.	Comb.
British Columbia	50%	Letter	Dept./Min.	No	Yes	No
Alberta	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	No	No
Saskatchewan	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	Yes	No
Manitoba	50%	Numeric	Board	No	No	No
Ontario	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	—	—
Quebec	60%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	Yes	Yes	No
New Brunswick						
French	55%	Numeric	Board	No	Yes	No
English	50%	Numeric	Board	No	Yes	No
Nova Scotia	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	—	—
Prince Edward Isl	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	—	—
Newfoundland and Labrador	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northwest Terr.	50%	Numeric	Dept./Min.	No	No	No
Yukon	50%	Letter	Dept./Min.	Yes	Yes	No

Quebec and Newfoundland say they adjust school marks to ensure that there is consistency of standards of marking among schools, whereas those who adjust provincial examination marks say that they do it to compensate for problems with the examinations or to ensure that overall school marks and examination marks are consistent with each other.

Student Evaluation for Program and System Evaluation

Nearly all assessments put in place for evaluating programs and the performance of the education system were, of course, established to address the demand for accountability and improvement. Their purpose is also to determine the extent to which students in a particular school, district, province, country, etc., are achieving the aims and goals deemed to be of value to society and to general personal development. Information gathered from these assessments is intended for boards and the provinces to use to target areas where improvements are needed, and to hold themselves accountable to students and public for doing whatever is necessary.

In this type of evaluation, the stakes become higher for others than for the individual student. The administrators, teachers, and other professionals are being held accountable and responsible for ensuring the quality of the system by seeing that students achieve the goals agreed to by educators and society at large. As a result, educators have a deep desire to ensure that these evaluations are appropriately designed, administered, and used. They want to ensure that the evaluation instruments are the best that they can be.

The survey showed that all provinces and territories use student evaluation results for program evaluation even when they do not have their own formal program assessments in place. Eight jurisdictions indicated that they had developed tests especially for evaluating how program goals were being achieved. In two others, provincial examination results (used primarily for student certification) are analyzed for program and system evaluation. Only one jurisdiction had no provincial assessments in place. Most jurisdictions also have participated in a number of national and international assessments over the years and have used the results to compare their general performance with that of others elsewhere. Also, as indicated in Table 9, a few systems even use commercial nationally normed tests to ensure they can consistently compare their students' performance with a pre-established Canadian norm.

Table 9. Assessment for Program Evaluation

Province	What Type of Assessment is Used			Sample or Census	Type of Sample
	Provincial	National	International		
British Columbia	CRTs [1]	SAIP[2]	IEA Studies (SIMS/ SISS, TIMSS) [3] and IAEP[4]	Both, depending on program	Stratified
Alberta	CRTs and provincial exams results	SAIP	TIMSS and IAEP	Both, depending on program	Stratified
Saskatchewan	CRTs and CAT[5]	Statistics Canada studies	IEAP	Sample	Stratified
Manitoba	CRTs	SAIP	IEAP	Sample	Random or Stratified
Ontario	CRTs	SAIP	SIMS/SISS, IAEP and TIMSS	Both, depending on program	Stratified
Quebec	Provincial exam results	SAIP	IAEP and International Baccalaureate	Both, depending on program	Stratified
New Brunswick	English: CRTs French: —	SAIP SAIP	IAEP and TIMSS IAEP	Eng. &Fr.: Both, depending on program	Eng. & Fr.: Random or Stratified
Nova Scotia	CRTs	SAIP	IEAP	Both, depending on program	Stratified
Prince Edward Island	—	SAIP	—	Sample	Stratified
Newfoundland and Labrador	CRTs, CTBS[6] and provincial exam results	SAIP	IAEP and TIMSS	Sample	Stratified
Northwest Territories	—	SAIP	—	Sample	Stratified
Yukon	CRTs	SAIP	—	—	Stratified

[1] CRT — Criterion Referenced Test

[2] SAIP — School Achievement Indicators Program (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada).

[3] International Assessments of International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) — SIMS/SISS and TIMSS (Second and Third International Mathematics and Science Studies)

[4] IAEP — International Assessment of Educational Progress — in mathematics and science

[5] CAT — Canadian Achievement Tests, a set of basic skills tests developed by McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited

[6] CTBS — Canadian Tests of Basic Skills, a set of basic skills tests developed by Nelson's Canada

Table 10. Perceived Standards of Graduates by Subject Area

Subject	Number of Respondents (of 13)[1] who Felt Student Performance Standards Had:			
	Declined	Remained the Same	Increased	No Opinion
Mathematics	2	7	4	0
Language	1	7	5	0
Literature	3	6	2	2
Second language	0	7	5	1
Science	1	4	9	0
Social studies	1	7	5	0
Computer science	0	2	8	3
Theatre arts	0	6	5	2
Physical education	1	8	3	1
Northern studies[2]	—	—	1	—
Career and technology studies[2]	—	—	1	—

[1] New Brunswick has been double counted because French and English systems operate as completely separate entities.
[2] Listed as "other" by one jurisdiction.

Standards of Student Performance

Respondents from the 12 jurisdictions were asked how they felt about the standards of achievement of students today compared to ten years ago. The survey identified a number of subject areas common to the secondary school curriculum in all provinces and posed questions about standards in each of these subject areas. The responses were interesting, and, because of the reluctance of several contacts to be quoted, rather political as well. For this reason Table 10 does not refer to specific jurisdictions. The information is useful, however, since it indicates a pattern in responses.

By far the largest number of respondents felt that the standards had remained the same over the past ten years, but in science and computer technology, areas where there has been a great deal of public pressure to improve student performance, a large number of respondents felt that standards had improved. Also, a few provincial contacts felt that standards had increased in their province in lan-

guage (communication skills) and in second language learning. Literature was the area where the greatest number of jurisdictions felt that standards had declined. In spite of the increased emphasis on science, mathematics and technology in the past few years, five jurisdictions felt that standards had improved in other areas such as social studies and theatre arts.

In addition to the eight subject areas presented to the respondents, two other areas were mentioned, each by one of the territories: Northern studies, and career and technology studies.

One wonders if standards in science and computer technology are being confused with the amount of effort and emphasis put on this area over the past decade. It has been indicated that any growth in this area, especially in technology, would show up as improvement, because it is new and virtually nothing was being done in this area a few years ago.

Use of Performance-Based Evaluation in Provincial Assessment

Eight provinces indicated that they were using more performance-based or authentic evaluations in both school and provincial assessment. However, most provincial examinations tend to be primarily paper and pencil test items. There are, however, some cases in which performance-based evaluations are being used. For example, in writing, the process approach is used in testing, and in second language, some provincial examination and program assessments cover the full range of reading, writing, listening and speaking objectives using techniques classified as "authentic" or performance-based.

When all provincial/territorial officials had been interviewed, it was interesting to see that all together numerous subjects were identified as using some performance-based evaluation. The following is a complete list of the subject areas referred to: communication skills, social studies, visual arts, history, theatre arts, physics, stenography, chemistry, vocational education, biology, second language, science, language arts, and mathematics.

From looking closely at the responses, we see that most respondents considered performance-based evaluation to include any assessment that went beyond the use of objective items (multiple choice, matching, etc.). That is, extended response (essay) items were considered performance-based evaluation, as were lab or hands-on observation evaluations. There is an obvious attempt to include this type of evaluation in many of the large-scale assessments now underway in Canada. Most respondents felt that the school portion of the evaluation of provincial examinations should be the performance assessment part.

Methods of Evaluation in Schools

Ministry officials said that unit tests were by far the most common method of evaluating students in high school classrooms, confirming that testing is per-

haps considered to be the most efficient and reliable method of evaluating a large range of academic objectives at secondary school.

Officials from the 12 jurisdictions were asked what they believed were the most common evaluation techniques used by teachers in high schools. The question was open-ended without any examples or prompts. Although most jurisdictions mentioned only three or four methods, some mentioned up to six. The number of times each of the following was listed as a primary method of evaluation is indicated below:

Unit tests	12
Science lab work	12
Projects	8
Assignments	5
Performance-based assessment	5
Final examinations	4
Class work	2
Peer evaluation	1
Homework	1
Portfolios	1
Student-teacher interviews	1

The traditional means of evaluating students remain high on the agenda for high school classrooms. Tests, which, of course, include final examinations, are not surprisingly the most common, because they are more easily developed, can be highly reliable, and can usually be administered to large groups in a class period. Other types of evaluation, such as performance-based ones and pupil-teacher interviews take time and can only be used sparingly where each teacher works with large numbers of students, as most high school teachers do. It was surprising, however, to have portfolios and homework so infrequently mentioned. It is worth noting that alternative types of evaluation methods are often used in evaluating the performance of students with various disabilities or needs.

Satisfaction with Policies and Practices in Secondary Evaluation

Officials were asked about the extent to which they were satisfied with assessment policies and practices in their province. This question offered a six-point forced choice response ranging from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied." In most cases, respondents were positive about evaluation but only one jurisdiction gave evaluation in their province the top rating, five said they were "satisfied," and four said they were "somewhat satisfied." Three provinces, however, were dissatisfied, two "somewhat dissatisfied" and one "very dissatisfied."

They were also asked about changes they would like to see made in provincial policy and practice.The responses suggested that there was a need to:

- ✔ Emphasize the importance of using a broad range of evaluation strategies to reflect the full range of goals and objectives of programs, including, among others, the use of more authentic, hands-on evaluation;
- ✔ Provide more pre-service, in-service and professional development in classroom assessment;
- ✔ Place more emphasis on, and formalize procedures to ensure better use of, results from provincial examinations and assessments;
- ✔ Return to provincial examinations (where they were not already in use);
- ✔ Institute procedures to ensure more uniformity in the assignment of the school's share of the provincial examination marks;
- ✔ Put more emphasis on the development of more comprehensive criterion-referenced assessment;
- ✔ Develop formal policies to cover more aspects than student assessment;
- ✔ Develop clearly defined curriculum outcomes;
- ✔ Establish a formal means for evaluation experts and ministry officials in Canada to communicate, collaborate, and share experiences in student evaluation efforts and initiatives.

The most popular responses to the question of what changes should be implemented related to the need for evaluation to reflect a broader range of outcomes of educational achievement, to the need to return to more external testing, or to make better use of provincial assessment results where they already existed. Also, the need for more professional development in student evaluation seemed to be important. This was brought up on several occasions during the interviews with several respondents.

Policy and Practical Changes Being Undertaken

When provincial/territorial officials were asked if the changes or modifications that they felt were necessary were being implemented, most indicated that such work was being done. Some noted that they were reviewing provincial examinations and assessments to determine whether or not new methods of evaluation should be incorporated, some were looking at improving standard setting procedures and graduation requirements, some were looking at a more formal and

systematic procedure for reporting results, some were working with boards to develop indicators for reporting at the district and school level, some were working to improve or implement an accreditation system, and several were working to improve their policy documents. In fact, all provinces were involved in some type of evaluation and assessment retooling. Many were expanding their role to include a more proactive role in designing, in conjunction with boards, policies and guidelines for evaluating students in the classroom. Interestingly, this was an area where most provinces had not been very much involved.

Chapter 4

Role of the School Boards in Student Evaluation

IN ALL PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES surveyed, school boards have the primary responsibility for student evaluation policies used by teachers in the classroom. They play a major role, as well, in implementing provincial policy and guidelines, and in administering system-wide assessments. Additionally, in some cases, school boards have a key role in administering provincial examinations.

Of the 279 school boards that were surveyed, 140 responded. Thirty-nine per cent of those boards referred to themselves as rural, 32% stated they were urban and 28% classified themselves as being a combination of both urban and rural (one board had no response to this question). Approximately 71% of the boards stated they had five or fewer high schools in their district and 90% of boards said had ten or fewer schools in their district. A large number of the boards responding (30%) had fewer than 500 high school students in the district. Of the 44 boards that fell into this category, 27 of them had senior high school enrolments of 200-400 students. Twenty-six boards had a student population of 501-1000 students. Thirteen boards had student populations of over 5000.

Student Assessment Policies

The majority of school boards had a relatively comprehensive set of student evaluation policies in place. However, 12% of boards had no evaluation policy. This is surprising considering the great impact evaluation has on the lives of students and the work of teachers. A student's final assessment is obviously very dependent on the evaluation received from the teachers. Teachers are equally affected since a significant part of their time is dedicated to student assessment. In

fact, research conducted by Stiggins revealed that "teachers typically spend a third of their professional time or more involved in assessment-related activities."[21]

Approximately 88% of school boards indicated that they had assessment policies covering the last three years of high school. Listed below are the areas most commonly covered in policies.

Area Covered	% Boards Stating Area Was Covered
Purpose of evaluation	70.7
Grading	70.7
Reporting	70.7
Promotion, retention and placement	69.3
Methods/sources of evaluation	67.1
Use of results	62.9
Appeal procedures	51.4
Domains of learning	42.1
Extent and use of standardized testing	33.6
Performance/authentic evaluation	32.1

Some boards (10%) indicated that their polices covered other areas such as ownership of examination materials, procedures for make-up tests, and information provided to teachers and parents. It is surprising that only 32% of boards said their policies covered performance/authentic evaluation, considering that many provinces have tried to include performance-based evaluations in many areas of study.

Policy Design, Implementation, and Monitoring. Table 11 provides a breakdown of the responsibility for policy development, implementation and monitoring. Design and development of evaluation policies appear to be a mixed responsibility. Most school boards listed one of the following as being responsible for policy design: department/ministry of education (43.6%); school boards in conjunction with schools (42.9%); and school boards alone (42.9%). Some boards stated that responsibility for certain policies depends on the policy. For example, if the policy covered provincial examinations, the ministry was primarily responsible for it; if it covered school assessment issues such as reporting and promotion, it was the responsibility of the board. Other policies, such as those related to the choice of assessment strategies in the classroom, may be the sole responsibility of the schools.

Responsibility for implementing policies was also mixed. However, most boards listed either school boards and schools, or schools alone, as holding the responsibility for implementing policies. Clearly, those responsible for developing policies do not always hold the responsibility of implementing them.

21. R. J. Stiggins, *Teacher Training in Assessment: Overcoming the Neglect* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1991).

The school boards in conjunction with schools were most often noted (56%) as being responsible for monitoring policies to see if they have been implemented and understood satisfactorily. Most boards also selected more than one level of the educational system as being responsible for implementing and monitoring policies. It appears that policies are not monitored very stringently. Forty-four per cent of boards stated that policies are frequently monitored. Only 32% said that they were strictly enforced and 20% stated that policies were only occasionally monitored.

Table 11. Responsibility for the Design, Implementation and Monitoring of Evaluation Policies

Who is Responsible [1]	Development % Yes	Implementation % Yes	Monitoring % Yes
Dept./Min.	44	18	23
Dept./Min. and Boards	31	27	29
Boards	43	41	39
Boards and Schools	43	54	56
Schools	27	54	50
Other	3	1	3

[1] Choices are not mutually exclusive. Respondents could have selected more than one choice.

School boards use a variety of methods to ensure that policies and practices are implemented and understood at the school. Eighty-five per cent of boards distribute copies of policies and guidelines to the schools. Seventy-one per cent identify in-service as a method of implementing and reviewing policies. Other common methods include conducting school visits (58%), assessment training sessions (48%) and distributing sample materials (46%).

Related to policy implementation is the degree to which professional development activities are offered. Eighty per cent of the boards surveyed offer professional development activities in assessment training. Most activities take the form of workshops for teachers and focus on general evaluation practices. Subject-based activities where evaluation is a primary focus are also popular. Other activities include workshops for school administrators and subject-based professional development activities for teachers where student evaluation is a secondary focus.

Although there seems to be a strong emphasis on development activities and evaluation in general, only 46% of the boards responding said there is a designated person at their board whose primary responsibility is assessment and evaluation.

Policy Changes and Problems. A large majority of respondents stated that there have been recent changes in evaluation policies (67.1%) and practices (69.3%). The most common reasons were (a) a new ministry mandate, (b) to improve the quality of education, and (c) a desire to be more publicly accountable for the system. The most frequent policy changes were the introduction of new policies and the revision of existing ones. Other changes included a move to more formative evaluation and a greater emphasis on continuous assessment. For example, one board noted that policies have been changed to put more emphasis on ongoing assessment since it was recognized that examinations were not the best way to evaluate students. Departments and boards are attempting to modify policies to put less emphasis on paper and pencil testing and to ensure that a broader range of assessment techniques are being incorporated into the classroom.

The most cited changes in practice were an increase in the use of formative evaluations and more varied, non-traditional methods of evaluation. One board even devotes a section on the students' report cards for self-evaluation. (The student is asked to fill out sections on his or her dependability, enthusiasm, co-operation, initiative, organization and self-discipline.) A separate section asks the student to identify what can be done to improve his or her report. This indicates a move away from the traditional teacher evaluations and encourages the student to become more involved in self-assessment techniques, which may be used throughout the school year.

It is interesting to note that several boards stated they are using more summative evaluation. This probably refers to the move toward more provincial examinations and the need for a mark to reflect what students know about a subject at the end of the course. This may seem contradictory to the current move away from evaluations that serve purely as end-products, offering little in the way of feedback, especially if formative evaluation is used less frequently.

Only 36% of the boards identified policies that have been a particular problem for their schools. It would appear that despite the many recent changes in policies and practices, relatively few of them are causing difficulties. Two problems that were noted by several boards included difficulties in dealing with promotions, and problems related to marking and changes in evaluation. One board noted that the rapid pace with which the policies were being implemented was a problem. It may be that boards and schools need an adjustment phase when policies are introduced so that new philosophies and practices can be approached more slowly. This may reduce some of the difficulties associated with new changes in evaluation.

Approximately half of the sample (51%) identified areas in which they felt policies should be modified. Several boards stated that policies were currently under review. Others wanted to see a continuous monitoring and updating of policies. Many boards simply stated that existing policies needed to be modified — without specifying in which areas the modifications should occur.

Student Assessment Practices

Although a wide range of evaluation practices are used by boards, by far the most common are teacher-made tests. This confirms what departmental officials said. Table 12 shows the first, second, and third choice of evaluation method selected by board officials for a number of subject areas.

For most subjects, the method of evaluation most commonly used is a teacher-made test. The only two subjects that did not have this listed as a first choice were physical education and theatre, both courses that focus on behavioural skills. These two had observation listed as the most common method of evaluation.

The method of evaluation listed as a second choice depended on the course. Homework and projects were both listed for three courses. Teacher-made tests were listed as the second choice for physical education, and projects were listed as the third choice. The reverse was the case for theatre — projects were the second choice and teacher-made tests were the third choice. All subject areas still rely on teacher-made tests as an important method of evaluation and in most subjects it is the main method used.

Projects and homework were commonly listed as the third method of evaluation. From the table it can be concluded that there are three main methods of evaluation used across most subjects: teacher-made tests, projects, and homework. Observation is commonly used in subjects that require the students to acquire behavioural skills. It appears that the use of other less traditional methods of assessment, such as performance evaluation, portfolios, and daily work is still somewhat limited.

Boards were asked whether they used performance-based evaluation in any areas of assessment and how extensively it was used. Seventy-four per cent of the school boards stated that they did use performance evaluation. A large number of boards (52%) use performance evaluation in physical education. English (49%) and second language (48%) were two other courses in which performance evaluation was used by a good number of boards. Forty-four per cent of boards indicated that it was used in science, computer studies and theatre and arts. Some 37% of the sample reported using performance assessments in mathematics; and only 33% used it in social studies.

Performance evaluations are used by 64% of the boards responding as a means of evaluating some course objectives. Twenty per cent indicated that it was a primary means of evaluation for assigning marks and 25% reported using it to assess objectives that are difficult to assess by more traditional forms of evaluation. Very few boards, only 10% of the sample, said they used this type of assessment as a tool for student feedback. This finding does not support the desire expressed by many boards to move towards using more formative types of evaluation. Apparently authentic assessment is not viewed by many boards as a viable means of conducting evaluations for short-term student progress.

Table 12. Evaluation Methods Preferred for Selected Subjects (First, Second and Third Choices)

Subject Area	Preferences		
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Mathematics	Teacher-made tests (62%)	Homework (54%)	Projects (17%)
Science	Teacher-made tests (63%)	Homework (21%)	Projects (24%)
English	Teacher-made tests (49%)	Homework (16%)	Projects (17%)
Second Language	Teacher-made tests (44%)	Observation (13%)	Projects (15%)
Social Studies	Teacher-made tests (56%)	Projects (24%	Homework (28%)
Computer Studies	Teacher-made tests (39%)	Projects (21%)	Homework (14%)
Physical Ed	Observation (35%)	Teacher-made tests (19%)	Projects (14%)
Theatre	Observation (24%)	Projects (20%)	Teacher-made tests (9%)
Co-operative Ed	Teacher-made tests (19%)	Observation (14%)	Projects (10%)

1. A total of 140 boards responded.
2. Methods were selected from the following: standardized tests, publisher tests, teacher-made tests, homework, learning journals, observation, projects, portfolios, self-evaluation, teacher-student conferences, assignments, school board exams, provincial exams, participation, daily work, laboratory work, oral exams, oral presentations, attendance, performance evaluations, work experience and employer interviews.

Boards and Provincial Examinations

Of the 140 that responded, 112 boards said they have students who write provincial/territorial examinations. The majority of boards indicated that these examinations are marked by either the evaluation division of the department of education or by a committee of teachers overseen by the department of education. Ten per cent of boards said that provincial examinations were marked by a committee of teachers overseen by the school board and a further 6% have the examinations marked by an external committee of teachers and subject specialists.

Seventy-five per cent of the boards responding submit school marks to the department for those students writing provincial/territorial examinations. This

corresponds to the proportion of those provinces conducting provincial examinations. Of the boards responding, most had a good grasp of the provincial regulations on provincial examinations. However, there were several boards that did not know the percentage amount of their schools' contribution to the provincial grade received by students. Since Ontario, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were not holding provincial examinations at the time the survey was conducted, most boards from these provinces stated that the school portion was worth 100% of the final mark. However, in one of the provinces with no provincial examinations, one board stated that the school portion was worth 50-60%. It appeared that some boards either misinterpreted the survey question or that these boards were unfamiliar with the departmental regulations.

Many boards are required to use specified criteria for assessing the school portion of a student's mark in provincial examination courses. Forty-one per cent of boards stated that they do have special criteria in these cases. Depending on the board, the responsibility for preparing these criteria varies. Nineteen per cent of boards stated it was prepared by the ministry, 17% indicated that the school boards were responsible, 16% said the schools were responsible, and 14% said it was the responsibility of teachers. These responses are not mutually exclusive. That is, several boards selected more than one of the possible choices provided.

Board Satisfaction with Provincial Examinations

To determine how boards felt about the current system of provincial examinations, they were asked whether they thought there should be a system of provincial examinations. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents felt that there should be a such a system. Most boards indicated that these examinations should be held in the core subject areas. Sixty-six per cent stated there should be a math provincial examination, 64% felt there should be one in science and 65% of respondents would like to see a provincial examination in English. Another 48% of boards felt there should be a second language examination, and 46% reported that an examination should be held in social studies. Fifteen per cent of respondents preferred a provincial examination in computer/technology studies and 12% felt an examination should be held in co-operative/vocational education. Only 4% of respondents indicated that examinations should be held in physical education, theatre, and arts. Interestingly, the strongest opposition to a system of provincial examinations came from those provinces that were not holding such examinations at the time of the survey.

Board Emphasis on Evaluation

Student evaluation has a tremendous impact on the lives of students, and according to most research, teachers spend approximately one-third of their preparation and instructional time dealing with evaluation and related issues. De-

spite this, there were many boards — 17 in this study — that had no policies covering high school evaluation. Furthermore, only 46% of the boards said they had someone at their board whose primary responsibility was evaluation. Evaluation was nearly always seen as a secondary rather than a primary activity of the system.

There is, however, a move toward quality service and greater use of goal-related information in decision-making and improvement. In education, optimizing student performance is the primary goal of the system, and measuring achievement as thoroughly as possible is the only way it can move beyond mediocrity.

Chapter 5

Scholarships and Student Assessment

SCHOLARSHIPS for graduating students are granted from a number of sources, including the provinces, federal government, school boards, schools, unions, businesses, and private individuals and foundations. These scholarships range from a few dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. They are a highly valued source of help to those who pursue post-secondary education, and, in fact, most scholarships can only be accepted if a student intends to pursue some kind of further education.

Since scholarships are so closely tied to testing results, a section dealing directly with scholarships was added to both the ministry interviews and to the school board questionnaire. The purpose was to determine the primary sources of secondary school scholarships and awards, on what basis these are awarded, and what kinds of special requirements are tied to receiving them. Since this was somewhat of a secondary issue, the survey was not comprehensive and did not cover the many issues associated with scholarships. Scholarship and its link to assessment is strong, and some exploration of that link was considered useful in this study.

Who Awards Scholarships?

Table 13 shows that five jurisdictions offer a provincial scholarship program; seven do not. However, as the board results show, there are a number of scholarship programs available in all provinces, even when the province does not offer them.

Table 13. Provincial Scholarships for Graduating Students

Province	Is There a Scholarship Program?	Subject-based Awards?	What Are the Award Criteria?	How Is Achievement Measured?	Special Requirements
British Columbia	Yes	Yes	Academic excellence by subject area	Provincial scholarship examination by subject area; participation optional	Canadian citizen: maintain a minimum overall average on test
Alberta	Yes	No	Overall academic excellence	Provincial examinations and school marks combined	Must show proof of registration at a post-secondary institution
Saskat-chewan	Yes	No	—	School marks and teacher recom-mendation; provincial exam and school marks for selected subjects	Must show proof of regis-tration at a post-secondary institution
Manitoba	No	—	—	—	—
Ontario	No	—	—	—	—
Quebec	Yes	No	Qualify for post-secondary and financial aid	—	Must meet special financial need requirement
New Brunswick	No	—	—	—	—
Nova Scotia	No	—	—	—	—
Prince Edward Island	No	—	—	—	—
Newfound-land and Labrador	Yes	Some	Top academic achievement by province, by electoral district and in science	Provincial scholarship examination; participation optional	—
Northwest Territories	No	—	—	—	—
Yukon	No	—	—	—	—

Criteria for Awarding Scholarships

Three of the five provincial scholarships are awarded on the basis of overall academic achievement; in one case it is offered for high subject-based achievement, and in another it is based upon financial need. In Newfoundland and Labrador, scholarships are also offered by provincial electoral districts where the three top academic students in each district are awarded scholarships. The award is based only on achievement in the district and some of these students may have lower achievement scores than others who did not receive scholarships in other districts or on the basis of other scholarships given provincially.

How Scholarship Eligibility is Measured

Of the five jurisdictions awarding provincial scholarships, two use a scholarship examination system, and two use the provincial examinations as the basis for the awards. One uses school marks and teacher recommendations.

Special Scholarship Requirements

To receive scholarships, students in most provinces must adhere to special requirements. In some cases, students being educated in the province have to show that they are registered at a post-secondary institution; others have to show that they are Canadian citizens. In yet other provinces, students must maintain an overall minimum average or must show that they have met graduation requirements in the provincial certification system. In Quebec, students must qualify for a post-secondary institution and show that they have a need for financial support.

Chapter 6

Best Practices in High School Evaluation

RECENT PRESSURES from parents, employers, and other groups with vested interests in the education of high school students have motivated board and department officials to take a critical look at the evaluation policies and practices that are being implemented in our schools. This, in turn, has led to a flow of new assessment ideas and philosophies. Moves toward more comprehensive assessments, including performance-based and self-evaluations, are producing a wave of innovative assessment techniques. Assessment's clear link with improved achievement has also resulted in a renewed provincial emphasis.

Both provincial and school board officials were asked about their level of satisfaction with high school evaluation policies and practices, about what they felt should be changed, and whether or not some of these desired changes were being implemented. School boards were also asked what some of their best assessment practices were. From the interviews, questionnaires, and the materials (documents, policy guidelines, etc.) supplied by the respondents, a number of very interesting practices came to light. Without having a section to focus on these, this report would have missed some of the most interesting characteristics of evaluation in the country.

The best practices discussed by boards fell into seven broad areas:

- ✔ use of a broad range of assessment methods to ensure comprehensive coverage of objectives and to ensure that assessment is linked to learning outcomes
- ✔ introduction of or improvements to provincial examinations
- ✔ greater use of summative evaluation to consolidate what students have learned by the time a program of studies has been completed
- ✔ use of formative evaluation to improve classroom achievement

- ✔ greater emphasis on modifying evaluation for special needs students
- ✔ use of performance-based assessment in the classroom and in large-scale assessments
- ✔ more reporting to parents and the public

Many boards recognized the use of a broad range of assessment techniques as one of the best approaches to evaluating students. The philosophy of relying solely on pencil and paper tests is frowned upon by most educators and although this method of evaluation is still the most commonly used, it is usually done in combination with other methods. School boards indicated that using a mixture of both formative and summative assessment techniques is the best strategy for providing fair student evaluations. Many boards stressed that a combination of on-going evaluations along with an end of the year common examination was the best approach.

Many boards also identified provincial examinations as a "best practice." Apparently, the move to re-introduce provincial examinations in recent years has been favourably received. Many boards feel that a system of comprehensive year-end examinations is critical in providing a thorough student assessment, and in informing the public about student graduation performance. It is important to note, however, that most boards stated that final examinations should be used only in conjunction with a broad range of other daily assessment strategies that recognize a student's efforts throughout the school year. In fact, all jurisdictions follow a practice of shared evaluation that recognizes the importance of daily classroom assessments as well as year-end summative evaluations.

Another common position is that there is, in fact, no best practice. Many boards stated that evaluations should be based on the type of course material being taught and that no one method of evaluation was suitable to all subjects. Again, boards often expressed a desire to see a variety of evaluation techniques used across all subject areas.

The practice of modifying assessment strategies to provide better evaluations for special needs students is a further example of tailoring assessments to specific purposes. Although boards recognize the need for uniform and consistent evaluations, they also note that policies must not exclude those students who have needs that cannot be met by the mainstream evaluation practices. Where there is evidence that students have achieved learning objectives, but, for special reasons, cannot show their achievement through practices used by the majority of students, alternative methods of evaluation are used.

More and more, schools are relying on performance-based assessments to evaluate both individual student achievement as well as the overall effectiveness of certain programs. A student's final mark is rarely the result of the total of marks received on selected tests. Grades are often partially based on group discussions, one-on-one observations, or other activities such as oral interviews or presentations. Teachers are also including grades on portfolios, learning journals and other writing samples as a component of a student's final evaluation. Even chap-

ter tests and provincial examinations are being refined in many cases to include a written component and are relying less on multiple-choice items.

Some boards allow students themselves to become more active in the evaluation process by promoting self-evaluations and peer evaluations. Through this process, students become aware of the essential considerations involved in any assessment. This provides them with valuable feedback, which may be used as a self-assessment tool throughout the school year.

Several boards have adopted evaluation policies that specifically include accountability to parents, students, and employers as an integral component of student evaluation. The reporting of student progress has been modified by many boards so that parents and students are better and more frequently informed. Report cards may even include room for students to comment on their progress and to make suggestions for improvement.

Many boards included samples of their evaluation work with their questionnaire responses: policy documents, reporting and grading guidelines, and a variety of other evaluation materials. Most information referred to assessment beliefs, methods of evaluation, exam schedules, and the use of assessment results. Occasionally, however, interesting information pamphlets and guides were received. One of these was *A Guide for Teacher Reflection*, an information folder on student evaluation that encouraged the teacher to think about, and discuss with colleagues, a number of questions about student assessment practices. These questions focused on issues such as the use of assessments, methods of evaluation, and reporting techniques linked with student learning styles, etc. (A copy of the centre part of the folder is included in Appendix C.) Another board sent along a very brief and easy to read set of guiding principles for student evaluation suitable for both parents and educators. A different approach to policy was found in part of one board's documentation on evaluation. The intentions for student evaluation were framed as "goals" accompanied by a list of specific objectives to be obtained in the evaluation process. (See Appendix C.)

As well as the materials from boards, documents were also sent by many provincial ministries. Quebec and British Columbia, for example, provided materials showing significant and ground-breaking work done in the classroom as well as in large-scale assessment.

Chapter 7

Looking Forward

IF THE RESPONSES of ministries/departments and school boards reflect anything about the future of evaluation, it is likely to remain a healthy part of the education agenda for some time to come. It appears that high school provincial examinations could be back in all provinces in the near future. About a year ago, Ontario released its Royal Commission report *For the Love of Learning*, recommending sweeping changes in the area of provincial testing. The two Atlantic provinces without examinations are now collaborating in a common curriculum-common assessment enterprise. Likewise there is a Canada-wide common science curriculum initiative under way through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. These types of efforts will make it difficult to resist the tide toward common examinations or assessments, especially since participating provinces will have to share in the work related to these initiatives.

The general commitment to a greater emphasis on assessments, occasionally tempered by concerns about the political and societal influences, is driving the decisions about assessment. Inherent in the discussions and written elaborations were a number of comments related to factors that tend to shape the thinking of both ministry and board policy and practice. Respondents were very much aware of these influences and their implications on educational policy in evaluation. Noted among these were the present fiscal climate, which demands proof of quality and performance for dollars spent, the need for Canada's education systems to be internationally competitive, the extensive public demand for performance and accountability, the need to improve student achievement in Canada, the need to make assessment relevant to the needs of the classroom teacher, and, of course, the issues surrounding reliability of large-scale assessment results for high-stake purposes such as promotion, selection, and certification.

It was also evident that most provinces were attempting to ensure that the policies and practices at the ministries and departments were comprehensive enough to respond to these issues and concerns, and boards were concerned that they support a strong learning culture by ensuring that their plans and priorities reflected exemplary practice and policy. Often, however, there were concerns and questions about what constituted exemplary practice and policy. Some felt that developing common assessment and examinations at the national or regional level would encourage higher standards, others felt this was counterproductive; some felt that the use of comprehensive examinations that covered expected learning outcomes from several grades or levels of schooling would encourage ongoing review and hence improve learning; others felt this was unfair to students and would create limitations in scheduling programs. Some felt that performance-based assessment should form a major part of all large-scale assessments, while others felt that this was an unnecessary and inefficient use of resources when paper and pencil testing, especially in higher grades, is one of the most reliable methods of assessing cognitive learning. And finally, some felt that assessment is generally too curriculum-specific and should focus more on what society and the workplace expect of an educated person; others felt that this approach would not be in the best interests of students, since teachers were expected to teach primarily what was in the curriculum.

Reflecting on the interviews and the responses to the questionnaires, one can see that both boards and ministries are putting more emphasis on the development of comprehensive policies to cover all aspects of student evaluation. The ministries are becoming involved in developing policies and guidelines for the conduct of classroom assessment, a rather new phenomenon. Some of the material sent to the researchers from other provinces showed that much effort had been put into this work. The boards, many of whom had gone far beyond the work done by ministries, had taken their efforts down to a degree of detail that could be of use to teachers in their day-to-day work in the classroom.

In spite of the concerns raised, the connection between assessment and improvement of the quality of education appears to be firmly established in the minds of most educators. The only real hesitancy they had was related to their concern that pushing ahead too quickly might compromise the quality of the instruments and methods used. Respondents to the study clearly indicated that they wanted evaluation to be comprehensive enough to measure the full range of knowledge and skills covered in the curriculum deemed to be important to the individual and to society. There was clear evidence that educators wanted to see assessment move beyond paper and pencil testing to include, where necessary, performance-based assessments.

Although the relationships between assessment, standards, and accountability are understood and accepted, there is a clear message that the best interests of the students must always be kept in mind when designing, administering, analyzing, and using the results of any evaluation.

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Appendix A

DEPARTMENTS/MINISTRIES—TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

ATTN: DIRECTORS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT
CANADIAN PROVINCES/TERRITORIES

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Canadian Education Association (CEA). The CEA is interested in investigating both the techniques used to evaluate high school students across Canada and the policies which guide these practices. This review only pertains to those students who are in the final three years of the high school program. The information obtained from the present interview and from a questionnaire to school district superintendents/directors across the country will be documented in the final report. That final report will provide an overview of what is happening in assessment during the last three years of high school and will provide some insight into the best assessment practices currently available to Canadian teachers.
It is asked that you review the interview questions and, if necessary, pass them on to the person in your department/ministry who is in the best position to supply the information required. In order to decrease the actual interview time necessary, it is asked that the contact person respond to the questions and fax us these responses. (Please retain a copy for interview purposes). Within the following few days that person will be contacted by telephone to discuss and verify the information given.

Please note that the person selected for the interview should be someone who is very familiar with the policies and practices of student evaluation in your province or territory.

Lenora Perry Fagan
Telephone: 709-729-3000
& Dana Spurrell
Telephone: 709-729-1390

Department of Education
Newfoundland and Labrador

PLEASE FAX THE NAME AND PHONE NUMBER OF THE CONTACT PERSON TO BE INTERVIEWED TO DANA SPURRELL 709-729-3669 (FAX). A FAX SHEET IS ATTACHED.

DEPARTMENTS/MINISTRIES — TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

1. Province/Territory _____
Name of Contact _____
Position _____

2. Within your province, who designs and implements the policies regarding student evaluation in the final three years of high school?

_____
_____

If this is done by the school boards, does the Department/Ministry play any role? Please specify.

_____
_____

3. Have there been any major changes recently (past 10 years) in the policies, guidelines or practices regarding student assessment?

YES_____ NO_____

If yes, please explain the changes made.

_____
_____

What were the reasons for these changes?

_____
_____

When did these changes take place?

_____

4. Are the school boards at liberty to modify or alter these policies in any way to meet the needs of their schools?
YES_____ NO_____

5. Are there methods for ensuring that the policies, practices or guidelines are implemented and understood at the district and school level?
YES_____ NO_____

Specify

_____

6. Do you have provincial examinations for high school certification/ graduation?
YES_____ NO_____(If no, go to #11)

If yes, in what subject areas?

Literature_____		Earth Science _____	
Language_____		Geology _____	
Sec. Lang._____		Biology _____	
Computer Stud.____		Geography _____	
Mathematics ____		World Prob. _____	
Physics ____		History _____	
Chemistry ____		Art ____	

Others: _____

7. Who is responsible for preparing provincial examinations?

_____
_____

How are the provincial examinations prepared? (i.e., What is the development process?)

_____
_____
_____

8. Do your ***graduation level*** provincial examinations cover information from all three grades of the course (where applicable) or are the examinations based solely on the material for the final level course? For example, with courses such as math, which are usually taught at each level (grades 10, 11, 12), would the examination cover material taught in all three grades or just that taught in the upper level (grade 12)?

(a) Examinations only cover the material taught in the final level
(b) Some examinations cover material from all three levels

Please specify the courses

_____

_____

9. What percentage of a student's final mark is based on:
Provincial examinations _____
School evaluations _____

10. Can regular stream students graduate without doing selected provincial examinations?
YES_____ NO_____

If yes, on what basis?

(a) Certificate issued by school
(b) Standardized test scores (other than provincial examinations)
(c) Recommendation of teacher(s) and certificate issued by department/ministry
(d) Other, please specify

_____

11. What is your policy regarding special education students who are of school-leaving age?
(a) "Graduate" with certificate issued by school if objectives of specialized instruction are met
(b) "Graduate" with certificate issued by department/ministry if objectives of specialized instruction are met
(c) Graduate only if graduation qualifications of provincially mandated courses are met
(d) No current policy in place
(e) Other

Please specify.

_____

12. Over the past ten years, a great deal of public discussion has taken place on the level of skills and knowledge achieved by graduating students. Do you feel the standards being achieved by graduating students have declined, remained the same, or have increased for the following subject areas:

	Declined	Remained Same	Increased
Math			
Language			
Literature			
Second Lang			
Sciences			
Social Studies			
Computer Stud.			
Theatre & Arts			
Physical Ed.			
Others:			

13. In your opinion, what are the most commonly used methods to evaluate the school portion of a student's mark?

14. Do you use performance (authentic) evaluation in any areas of assessment?
YES_____ NO_____

If yes, in which subject areas?

_____

How extensively is this done?
(a) Used as primary means of evaluation
(b) Criterion for completion of course objectives
(c) Part of course objectives but not necessary for course completion
(d) Used as a tool for student feedback only
(e) Other, please specify

_____

15. Who issues high school diplomas/certificates?
(a) Provincial department/ministry of education
(b) District school board
(c) School

16. What is considered a passing grade?

_____

_____

17. What form of grading or reporting is most commonly used in your province?
(a) Letter grades
(b) Numeric grades
(c) Other, please specify

_____

18. Are any modifications (statistical adjustments, scaling, etc.) made at the provincial level to:

(a) School marks
(b)Provincial examination marks
(c) Combined (school and provincial) marks

Please specify.

_____

_____

19 A. Do you have assessments at the high school level for program evaluation or system evaluation purposes (e.g., criterion referenced or norm-referenced tests)?
YES_____ NO_____
Explain.

_____

B. For program evaluations, are all students assessed_____ or a sample of students_____?

If a sample is selected, what is the selection procedure?

_____

_____

20. Does the department/ministry of education in your province offer scholarships to graduating students?
YES_____NO_____ (If no, go to #23)

If yes, are these scholarships specific to a particular field of study?
YES_____ NO_____

Please specify.

_____

_____

21. How are recipients selected for these scholarships?
(a) Scholarship examination
(b) School marks and mark on scholarship examination
(c) School marks and recommendation of teacher(s)
(d) School marks only
(e) Provincial examination marks on selected subjects
(f) Provincial examination marks and school marks combined on selected subjects
(g) Other, please specify

_____ _____

If students write a scholarship examination, is this examination optional _____
or compulsory_____?

22. Are there any special requirements that the candidate needs to fulfil in order to receive the scholarship?
YES_____ NO_____

Please specify.

_____

23. To what extent are you satisfied with assessment policies and practices in your province?
(a) Very satisfied
(b) Satisfied
(c) Somewhat satisfied
(d) Somewhat dissatisfied
(e) Dissatisfied
(f) Very dissatisfied

Where would you like to make changes in the current policies and practices, if any?

_____

_____

Are any of these modifications in the process of being implemented?
YES_____ NO_____

Specify.

_____

24. How many students are enrolled the last three years of high school in your province?

Public _____ Native _____
Private _____
Institutional (Specialized) Schools _____

25. How many schools in the province offer a high school program?
Public _____ Native _____
Private _____
Institutional (Specialized) Schools _____

SUBMIT:
Please submit any documents that specify the guidelines, policies, etc., regarding:
(a) assessment
(b) grading
(c) reporting of grades/assessments
(d) promotion

PLEASE COMPLETE AND FAX TO:

DANA SPURRELL,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NEWFOUNDLAND 709-729-3669
PROVINCE/TERRITORY_____
CONTACT PERSON_____
POSITION _____
TELEPHONE
NUMBER_____
FAX NUMBER_____

Appendix B

TO SCHOOL BOARDS

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EVALUATION OF CANADIAN STUDENTS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL

Please complete the following questions as thoroughly as possible. Ensure that all applicable questions are answered by checking the boxes provided in the right-hand margin

1. School Board _____
   Province/Territory _____
   Name of Contact _____
   Position _____

2. Do you have student evaluation/assessment policies covering the last three years of high school? (✔)

   If yes, what areas of student evaluation are covered in the policies? Please check all that apply. (✔)
   (a) Purpose of evaluation
   (b) The use of results obtained from evaluations
   (c) Methods or sources of evaluation
   (d) The domains of learning (affective, psychomotor, cognitive)
   (e) Grading
   (f) Reporting
   (g) Promotion, retention and placement of students
   (h) Performance/authentic evaluation
   (i) Appeal procedures
   (j) Extent and use of standardized testing
   (k) Other. Please specify.

3. Who is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring these policies? (✔)
   (a) Department/Ministry of Education
   (b) Department/Ministry of Education in conjunction with the school boards
   (c) Individual school boards
   (d) Individual school boards and their schools
   (e) Individual schools
   (f) Other. Please specify.

4. To what degree are these policies enforced at the school level? (✔)
   (a) Strictly enforced
   (b) Frequently monitored
   (c) Occasionally monitored
   (d) Not at all enforced

5. Have there been any recent changes (past 10 years) in the assessment policies or practices of your board?
   (a) Policies: (✔)
   If yes, please specify the changes made.
   (b) Practices: (✔)
   If yes, please specify the changes made.

   _____

   When and why were these changes made?

   _____

6. Have there been any policies which have been particularly a problem for your schools? If yes, please specify.

   _____

7. What do you feel are the best assessment practices for your schools (in terms of evaluation for the final three years of high school)?

   _____

8. Do you feel the existing policies should be modified in any way? (✔)

   Please explain. _____

9. What methods does your school board have for ensuring that the policies and practices are implemented and understood at the school level? (✔)

   (a) Distribution of policies, guidelines and documents to all schools

(b) Distribution of model examinations and sample assessment materials
(c) School visits
(d) In-service/Professional development
(e) Assessment training sessions (through teachers' centre, universities, etc.)
(f) Other

10. Does your school board offer any professional development activities in the area of assessment training? (✔)

If yes, what is the nature (organization) of these professional development activities? Please check all that apply. (✔)
(a) Workshops designed for school board administrators focusing on general evaluation practices
(b) Workshops focusing on general evaluation practices for teachers
(c) Subject-based professional development activities for teachers with student evaluation as a primary focus
(d) Subject-based professional development activities for teachers with student evaluation as a secondary focus
(e) Other. Please specify.

11. Is there a designated person at your school board office whose primary responsibility is assessment and evaluation? (✔)

12. Please indicate the three methods of evaluation (standardized tests, publisher tests, teacher-made tests, homework, learning journals, observation, projects, portfolios, self-evaluation, teacher-student conferences, etc.) most commonly used in assigning marks in the following subject areas:
(a) Math
(b) Science
(c) English
(d) Second Language
(e) Social Studies
(f) Computer/Technology Studies
(g) Physical Education
(h) Theatre and Arts
(i) Co-operative/Vocational Education

13. Do you use performance (authentic) evaluation in any areas of assessment? (✔)
If yes, in which subject areas? (✔)
(a) English
(b) Second Languages
(c) Mathematics
(d) Science
(e) Computer Studies
(f) Social Studies
(g) Theatre and Arts
(h) Physical Education

Others: _____

How extensively is this performance evaluation done? (✔)
(a) Used as a primary means for assigning marks
(b) Used to evaluate some course objectives
(c) Used primarily for objectives that are difficult to measure in other ways
(d) Used as a tool for student feedback only
(e) Other. Please specify.

14. Do you have students who write provincial/territorial examinations? (✔)
If yes, who marks these examinations? (✔)
(a) The evaluation division at the Department/Ministry of Education
(b) A committee of teachers overseen by the department
(c) A committee of teachers overseen by the school board
(d) An external committee of teachers and subject specialists
(e) Other. Please specify.

15. Does the school submit a mark to the provincial Department/Ministry of Education for students writing provincial/territorial/ examinations? (✔)

16. How much is the school portion of a student's mark worth?

17. Do you have special criteria for evaluating the school portion of a student's mark for courses which have provincial/territorial examinations. (✔)

If yes, who prepares these criteria? (✔)
(a) Department/Ministry of Education
(b) School boards
(c) Schools
(d) Teachers

18. Do you feel that provinces/territories should have a system of provincial/territorial examinations for high school certification purposes?

If yes, in which subject areas should these examinations be administered? (✔)

(a) Math
(b) Science
(c) English
(d) Second Language
(e) Social Studies
(f) Computer/Technology Studies
(g) Physical Education
(h) Theatre and Arts
(i) Co-operative/Vocational Education
(j) Other. Please specify.

19. Does your school board offer scholarships to graduating students? (✔)
If yes, who provides funding for these scholarships? (✔)

(a) Department/Ministry of Education
(b) School board
(c) Schools
(d) Other. Please specify.

20. How are recipients selected for these scholarships? (✔)

(a) Scholarship examination
(b) School marks and marks on scholarship examination
(c) School marks and the recommendation of teachers
(d) School marks only
(e) Provincial/territorial examination marks on selected subjects
(f) Provincial/territorial examination marks and school marks combined on selected subjects
(g) Other. Please specify.

21. Are there any special requirements that the candidate must meet before receiving the scholarship? (✔)

If yes, please check any that apply from the following list.

(a) Must show proof of registration/admission at a post-secondary institution
(b) Must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
(c) Must pursue studies within the area for which the scholarship was awarded
(d) Other. Please specify.

22. Which of the following would you use to classify your district? (✔)

(a) Primarily rural
(b) Primarily urban
(c) Equal combination of rural/urban

23. How many students are there in the last three years of high school in your school district?

24. How many schools in your district offer a high school program?

NOTE:
Please submit any documents that specify the guidelines, policies, etc., regarding:
(a) assessment
(b) grading
(c) reporting of grades/assessments
(d) promotion/retention

Please return completed questionnaire to:

Ms. Dana Spurrell
Evaluation, Research, and Planning Division
Department of Education
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NF A1B 4J6
Fax: (709) 729-3669
by **August 8, 1994**.

Appendix C

Saskatoon (West) School Division Policy Code: HG-1

Category: Curriculum and Instruction

Student Evaluation

The Board of Education of the Saskatoon (West) School Division No. 42 endorses the belief that student evaluation is a systematic process of assessing student progress towards sets of planned and developmentally appropriate objectives which reflect the growth of the whole individual. Further, the Board of Education believes that effective evaluation is characterized by the quality, quantity, and variety of feedback to students and parents regarding individual progress.

Accordingly, the Board of Education accepts the following goals and objectives which will serve as guidelines as the Division develops a systematic process of assessing and reporting student progress within the educational curricula to facilitate the development of the whole student.

Saskatoon (West) School Division Policy

GOALS	OBJECTIVES
1. A wide range of evaluation methods will be used.	1. Formal methods will be used to assess student progress. Examples of formal methods are teacher-developed tests and examinations, commercially developed evaluation instruments and standardized tests.
	2. Informal methods will be used to assess student progress. Examples of informal methods are teacher observation, anecdotal records, performance appraisals, peer appraisal, and self-appraisal.
	3. Professional development opportunities and support will be provided to teachers to assist in expanding and enhancing evaluation methods.
	4. Standardized tests will be used in accordance with divisional policy. (Policy to be developed.)
2. The purpose of evaluation is to promote student growth and development in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.	1. Teachers will incorporate evaluative activities that will assess affective and psychomotor objectives as well as cognitive objectives.
	2. Student growth in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains should be reported to students and parents.
	3. Evaluation is primarily formative in elementary and middle years.
	4. A list of the major competencies will be developed at each grade level in each area of learning as resources are available.
	5. Retention at the K-8 level will occur only as part of a carefully designed development plan for an individual student. (Promotion and retention policy to be developed.)

3. Evaluation practices will be fair and equitable.	1. Teachers will provide evaluation plans to the students/parents as part of the course outline.
	2. Students must know on what basis and when they will be evaluated.
	3. In-service will be provided. Teachers will be familiarized with the principles and practices of fair student assessment.
	4. Parents and students will be made aware of the divisional appeals policy (to be developed).
	5. Each school will develop a process to annually monitor its evaluation plan and practices.
4. The results of evaluation will be regularly communicated to students and parents.	1. Mechanisms for reporting student programs will be developed which are appropriate for the needs of the various school populations.
	2. Student progress will be formally reported to parents at least twice per semester at the high school level and at least four times per year at other levels. The report can be a documented conference, a report card, or both.
	3. School staffs will work towards increasing the informal reporting process.
	4. Students should be active participants in the reporting process.
	5. A committee will be formed to study alternatives to the existing grading structure and current report cards.
	6. Any changes in the grading structure or report cards will be clearly communicated to parents and students.
	7. School staffs will develop a plan to communicate the results of all major tests, assignments, etc., to parents
5. Evaluation will be continuous and carefully planned to reflect instructional techniques and curricular objectives.	1. Teachers and administrators will seek to match evaluation devices to instructional techniques.
	2. Final comprehensive examinations based on at least 50% of the course content will be utilized in grades 9 to 12, unless precluded by subject content. The mark for the comprehensive examination should not represent more than 40% of the final mark.
	3. Evaluation devices should be weighted to reflect the relative importance of the curricular objectives.
6. Evaluation will be a major focus of professional development activities at the divisional level and school levels for 3-5 years, beginning in the 1993-94 school year.	1. In-service sessions will be provided to ensure all teachers know and understand the divisional evaluation policy.
	2. Additional in-services will be provided to build on and enhance the strengths of teachers in the area of evaluation.
	3. Opportunities will be provided for teachers to collaboratively plan and implement new evaluation devices and/or strategies.

Date approved: July 8, 1993 *Reprinted with the permission of Saskatoon West School Division*

NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE: STUDENT EVALUATION PRACTICES

What follows is an interview guide which can be used in several ways:

as the basis of a dialogue between principals and teachers regarding a school's approach to evaluation

as the basis of dialogue for teachers undertaking a Supervision for Growth project focused on their student evaluation practices

as a basis for reflection by an individual teacher who wants to assess her/his student evaluation practices

An overview of the nature and extent of evaluation practices in the school is the first step for principals and teachers as they examine their school's approach to student evaluation. The interview guide will enable both principals and teachers to gain an overall impression of a teacher as evaluator of student performance.

This guiding questionnaire is based on areas identified in the North York statement about student evaluation. The indicators listed under each question can be used to exemplify the question should clarification be required or as probes to elicit further information.

Principals and teachers are asked to send summaries of their interview responses to the Research & Evaluation Advisory Committee. Not only will this provide an overview of evaluation practices across the system which will help to shape North York's policy on student evaluation, but may identify unique approaches which can be shared with all teachers.

1) **What do you use evaluation for?**

diagnosis
gathering information on progress/ achievement
providing feedback about your teaching (resources, methods, management strategies)
providing feedback to parents and to students
as a means of student motivation and/or control
other comments

2) **What areas of learning objectives do you assess and what weight do you give to each? Are students involved in the setting of learning objectives and, if so, how?**

skills and knowledge taught in class
problem solving and investigational skills, application of skills and knowledge to new material, organizational skills
effort, commitment to continued learning, self-confidence to learn in spite of difficulty of task
social skills, co-operation, leadership
other comments

3) **What methods do you use to evaluate students and when?**

observation
interviews/conferencing
seminars
classroom, teacher-set
standardized tests (norm or criterion-referenced)
student self-evaluation

tests/exams
assignments, projects, essays, presentations
performance checklist (arts, technical, sports, science)
peer evaluation
group evaluation
feedback from parents
feedback from other staff
other comments

4) **How do you record what you find?**
anecdotal records
portfolios of student work
tracking sheet for (a) students (b) teachers
grades book
video or audio tapes, photographs
other comments

5) **Are you explicit about both the learning objectives and the evaluative methods which you will use? If so, how?**
share with students what is to be done and how it will be assessed at the beginning of the term/ week/assignment
set up a "contract"
discuss "fairness"
examine any possible bias in your evaluation criteria and counteract it
other comments

6) **How do your evaluation methods allow for the preferred learning styles of students?**
verbal, visual, kinesthetic
independent, small group, large group
4MAT categories (innovative, analytic, commonsensical, and dynamic)
field dependent/independent
other comments

7) **How do you adjust your evaluation methods for students who are learning English as a second language or who have one or more identified exceptionality(ies)?**
more time on tests
modify test or assignment
assess comprehension of material using translator/allow students to type on computer rather than handwrite
anecdotal comment on progress
postpone evaluative mark or comment
other comments

8) **How do you prepare your students for the various evaluation activities (e.g., tests, presentations, peer evaluation)?**

9) **What kind of feedback do your students give you about the various evaluative methods you use?**
preferences, dislikes
effect on student self-concept
other comments

10) **How candid are you in communicating what you know about a student to student and parent?**
relate back to methods used and records kept

11) **What additional things would you like to mention about your evaluation practices?**

12) **How can North York be most helpful to teachers in the area of evaluation?**

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SCARBOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

RATIONALE

Student evaluation is one of the most important and controversial aspects of both the educator's role and the teaching/learning process. It is imperative that educators use effective student evaluation practices. To foster the professional growth of educators in the area of student evaluation, the Scarborough Board of Education is committed to offering and supporting staff development programs.

This booklet is not prescriptive. Rather, it provides all Scarborough personnel with expectations, general principles, and features of student evaluation with which educators should be familiar. This document consolidates and summarizes information that is already available in existing Ministry and Board publications and in documents from other jurisdictions.

PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT EVALUATION

- ✔ Student evaluation should be used for a number of purposes.
- ✔ The purposes of student evaluation should be understood by the evaluator and by those being evaluated.
- ✔ The purposes of student evaluation should be communicated to, and understood by, parents/guardians and students.
- ✔ The standards used for interpreting student evaluation results should be consistent with the purposes of the evaluation procedure.
- ✔ Student evaluation procedures should be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation.
- ✔ Student evaluation procedures should be varied.
- ✔ More than one evaluation method should be used to ensure comprehensive and consistent indicators of student performance, i.e., to increase reliability.
- ✔ Evaluation practices should be keyed to valued outcomes.
- ✔ How evaluative judgements are made depends on the reference point that is used.
- ✔ Evaluation approaches should measure the underlying learning that they are intended to represent, i.e., they should be valid.
- ✔ Evaluation should occur throughout the teaching/learning process.
- ✔ Student evaluation should measure the process of arriving at the product as well as the product itself.
- ✔ Individual self-esteem should be a foremost consideration in the evaluation process.
- ✔ Evaluation methods should take into account the cultural and ethnic background and the prior experiences of students.

ESTABLISHING STANDARDS

- ✔ How evaluative judgements are made depends on the reference point that is used.
- ✔ The standards used for interpreting student evaluation results should be consistent with the purposes of the evaluation procedure.

In order for valid interpretations and judgements to be made about student performance, information from student evaluation procedures must be compared with some kind of reference point or

standard. Educators use three different kinds of reference points or standards for different purposes. All of them are legitimate, and each can be used independently or in combination with the others.

Criterion-referenced standard
evaluation in relation to a student's success in meeting stated objectives, outcomes, expectations or benchmarks.

Norm-referenced standard
evaluation in relation to other students within the class or across classes/schools/segment of a population.

Self-referenced standard
evaluation in relation to a student's own performance at different points in time.

EVALUATE: WHY?
PURPOSES OF STUDENT EVALUATION

- ✔ Student evaluation should be used for a number of purposes.
- ✔ The purposes of student evaluation should be understood by the evaluator and by those being evaluated.

Communicate with parents
Student evaluation provides significant information about student progress to be communicated to parents/guardians so that they may understand their child's performance in school.

Communicate with students
Student evaluation should provide constructive information that assists students in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, nurtures their self-esteem, and helps them improve their performance.

Develop self-evaluating individuals
An overall aim of student evaluation is to produce individuals who realistically evaluate themselves and their actions.

Diagnose
The results of diagnostic evaluation enable teachers to identify specific student needs.

Evaluate Formatively
Ongoing measurement of student performance is used to provide direction for improvement and adjustment to a program for individual students and for the whole class.

Evaluate Summatively
Student performance is measured at the end of a unit or period of time to make judgements about an individual student's success in the program. In addition, summative evaluation measures the extent to which a group of students is mastering the content, concepts, and skills, and developing the attitudes embedded in the curriculum.

Motivate
The process, product and feedback from student evaluation can encourage students and enhance self-esteem.

Place, promote, certify
Student evaluation is a significant component of the function of schools in the areas of student placement, promotion and certification.

EVALUATE: WHAT?
EVALUATING WHAT WE VALUE

- ✔ Evaluation practices should be keyed to valued outcomes.

- ✔ Evaluation approaches should measure the underlying learning that they are intended to represent; i.e., they should be valid.
- ✔ Student evaluation should measure the process of arriving at the product as well as the product itself.

The Ministry of Education defines curriculum as "all learning experiences that are provided for students under the auspices of the school and the school board" (OSIS, revised 1989, 5.17). Thus schools are expected to provide wide-ranging programs and experiences which touch many aspects of the students' lives. Whatever is important enough to teach is important enough to evaluate. Hence the evaluation practices of schools must reflect a many-faceted curriculum. The outcomes schools evaluate and the way schools evaluate them are the ultimate statements of what educators value in the curriculum.

During the past two decades, educational goals have promoted a broad range of outcomes and a variety of educational achievements. Educators and researchers have become knowledgeable about, and have demonstrated the importance of, such things as learning styles, brain theories, developmental stages, and multiple intelligences. This knowledge contributes to the continual reshaping of what and how educators teach. The recent emphasis on cooperative group learning, for instance, indicates that when expected outcomes change, so too must teaching and evaluation methods.

As society changes, what schools value will change; as more knowledge is gained about learning and evaluation processes, teaching and evaluation practices must change. Because evaluation practices tend to shape curriculum, educators must define what they value in the learning opportunities they provide, then assess those valued outcomes with appropriate techniques.

EVALUATE: HOW?
VARIETIES OF STUDENT EVALUATION

- ✔ Student evaluation procedures should be varied.
- ✔ Student evaluation procedures should be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation.
- ✔ More than one evaluation method should be used to ensure comprehensive and consistent indicators of student performance, i.e., to increase reliability.
- ✔ Evaluation methods should take into account the cultural and ethnic background and the prior experiences of students.

In order for student evaluation to reflect a board range of purposes and student outcomes, educators need to use a wide variety of student evaluation practices. Meaningful practices are distinguished by several key charactertistics: they consider all teaching/learning activities; they measure both the product and the process of arriving at the product; they reflect achievement in cognitive, affective, skill, and behavioural areas. These practices may include homework, projects, reports, quizzes, group work, tests, writing folders, and excursions.

There are many effective evaluation techniques. One of the most common involves paper and pencil evaluation, i.e., written tests and examinations. However, there are times when such traditional methods are inappropriate. For instance, many of the affective characteristics, like resourcefulness and self-reliance that are included in the Ministry's Goals of Education, are difficult to measure with traditional methods. Thus other techniques are necessary to measure the many different aspects of learning and to accommodate the students' preferred learning styles.

Not all evaluation should result in grades or marks; sometimes evaluation produces feedback to students and teachers that promotes further learning without generating a mark.

Anecdotal records, teacher journals or log books
contain systematic and objective narrative records of student accomplishments, needs, progress and behaviour.
Checklists, rating scales or performance charts
identify and record the students' levels of achievement or progress.
Demonstrations and presentations
display presentation skills in small or large groups, inside or outside the school.
Independent study projects
reveal skills such as organization, time management, setting goals, synthesizing and interpreting.
Input from staff members
extends an individual teacher's knowledge.
Interviews and conferences with students
reveal unique information and expand first-hand knowledge about individual students.
Paper and pencil procedures: examinations, tests, quizzes, essays
assess students' writing ability under a variety of conditions with a variety of models.
Peer evaluation
extends the teacher's knowledge by having students make systematic judgements about one another's performance relative to program objectives.
Performance assessments
assess the actual performance of a complex set of activities.
Portfolios or continuous files
provide a comprehensive summary of student accomplishment.
Process folios or files
contain a student's initial draft and completed work with accompanying journal entries which encourage reflection.
Self-evaluation
extends the teacher's knowledge by having students reflect on their own achievements and needs relative to program objectives.
Seminars that include process, written materials, and oral presentations
reveal higher order skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, inquiry, synthesis, and evaluation by individuals or groups.
Simulations or docudramas
reveal creativity, analysis, synthesis and evaluation through the use of problem-solving, decision-making and role-playing tasks.
Student journals
contain personal records of activities, experiences, strengths and needs.
Student profiles
provide a compilation of data, which might include student work samples and records, attitude checklists, attendance reports, or records of community service.
Teacher observations
include systematic, first-hand observations of a student by the teacher.
Video or audio tapes and photographs
record a student's performance and accomplishments.

EVALUATE: WHEN?
APPROPRIATE TIMES FOR EVALUATION

✔ Evaluation should occur throughout the teaching/learning process.Evaluation of student performance should occur regularly, throughout the teaching/learning processs, for a variety of purposes:

- teachers, students, and parents/guardians need regular detailed information to be kept aware of the students' progress in relation to the outcomes and to make deci-

sions about improving understanding and performance; this is formative evaluation;

- teachers and students need to determine whether the program, the learning materials, the teaching strategies, or the student's own approach to learning needs to be adjusted; this form of evaluation is diagnostic;

- teachers, students, and parents/guardians (as well as others) need to determine the student's achievement in relation to the stated outcomes or at the end of a particular unit or period of time in order to make decisions about future directions (e.g., promotion, course selection, entry to post-secondary); this is summative evaluation.

MODIFICATIONS IN EVALUATION

- ✔ Evaluation methods should take into account the cultural and ethnic background and prior experiences of students.
- ✔ Individual self-esteem should be a foremost consideration in the evaluation process.

Evaluation procedures need to be modified for individuals such as English as a Second Language/ English Skills Development students, and students with identified exceptionalities (communicational, behavioural, intellectual, and physical).

Such modifications or adaptations should be made to ensure the best understanding of a student's performance. Modifications may include providing more time on examinations, permitting the use of a word processor, and substituting oral for written evaluation.

It is important to consider the stage of a student's development when selecting or creating a measurement procedures strategy. Overall, teachers must be flexible in order to accommodate individual needs.

COMMUNICATION EDUCATORS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, STUDENTS

- ✔ The purpose of student evaluation should be understood by the evaluator and by those being evaluated.
- ✔ The purposes of student evaluation should be communicated to, and understood by, parents/guardians and students.

Communication is enhanced by frequent contact among educators, parents/guardians, and students. Contact can take the form of meetings, correspondence, telephone calls, and formal and informal reports. For information regarding school records, the following documents may be consulted: the *OSR Guideline Manual* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Communication with parents/guardians and students provides the opportunity for educators to share what they value; describe learning opportunities and assessment techniques; provide information on the performance of individual students; obtain relevant information from parents/ guardians and students.

Educators have a responsibility to inform students about the role and significance of evaluation in the teaching/learning process. This information can help students to develop a clear understanding of the connection between program objectives and the evaluation process; understand the importance of practice with a variety of evaluation approaches; establish the extent to which they are fulfilling the program objectives and the measures they may take to improve their performance.

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Canadian Education Association
Suite 8-200
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V5

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